



NASHUA RIVER
WILD & SCENIC
STUDY COMMITTEE

Nashua • Squannacook • Nissitissit Rivers

Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers
Officially Designated to be Part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

Sections of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers, 52.8 miles, are now designated to be part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System pursuant to a law signed by the President of the United States on March 12, 2019. This brings to successful conclusion the decade-long effort of the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA), the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee, and eleven Massachusetts & New Hampshire communities to achieve this national recognition.

“This has been an incredible journey,” said Lucy Wallace, Chair of the Study Committee and President of the NRWA. “We’re tremendously excited about what designation means for the future of our rivers.”

“Designation makes preservation of outstanding resources a paramount factor for all river-related projects that require federal funding or permits, such as new dams and hydroelectric development, but does not impact existing facilities,” said Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Executive Director of the NRWA and a member of the Study Committee. “Designation makes the rivers eligible for federal funds and technical assistance in support of the goals identified in the Study Committee’s *Stewardship Plan*.¹”

Drew Kellner, who represents Brookline, NH on the Study Committee, comments, “It’s important to recognize that designation does not change property rights or cost the towns any money. Designation is likely to boost local economic development.”

The Nashua Wild and Scenic River Act was included as part of the *Natural Resources Management Act*, S. 47. Senator Ed Markey (MA-D) was key in getting the *Nashua River Wild and Scenic Act* moved through the Senate this month, with the full support of Senators Elizabeth Warren (MA-D), Jeanne Shaheen (NH-D), and Maggie Hassan (NH-D). In the House, Representatives Lori Trahan (MA-03) and Anne Kuster (NH-02) supported the progress of the bill through passage on February 26th.

“This entire process started in 2009 when conversations began between the NRWA, the National Park Service (NPS), and then-US Representative Niki Tsongas’s office about whether the Nashua River might be eligible and suitable for designation,” said Lucy Wallace. Following a promising preliminary review, and demonstrated support from the communities, Representative Tsongas forwarded and championed the necessary legislation to authorize a formal Study of the rivers.

“That authorization was signed by President Obama in December of 2014,” stated Al Futterman, NRWA Land Programs Director and Coordinator for the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee. “The three-year Study was conducted by a Committee of volunteers appointed by the eleven river-front communities in the Study area, together with the NRWA and NPS. The Committee worked to determine if the rivers were eligible and suitable for designation, and identified outstanding three remarkable resource values, biological diversity, recreational and scenic, and historic and cultural. They also conducted extensive community outreach, and drafted the *Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan*.”

Last spring the eleven communities -- Ayer, Bolton, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend in MA, and Brookline and Hollis in NH -- voted affirmatively at their Annual Town Meetings to accept the Committee’s *Stewardship Plan* and its recommendation to seek designation. Robert Pontbriand, Ayer Town Manager and Chair of the Study Committee’s Outreach Committee commented, “There was tremendous public support evidenced by the Town Meeting votes and the scores of support letters offered by state and federal agencies, the Governors of MA and NH, sportsmen’s groups, conservation organizations, regional planning commissions, chambers of commerce, and businesses.” The Nashua Wild and Scenic River Act was introduced to Congress by Representative Niki Tsongas in the fall of 2018.

Marion Stoddart, a founder of the Nashua River Watershed Association, says “Fifty years ago the Nashua River was one of most polluted rivers in nation before restoration, and now the rivers are designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and just in time for the NRWA’s 50th Anniversary celebration this year! It’s a stunning moment.”

Now that designation has been achieved, the next step will be the formation of a Stewardship Council comprised of representatives appointed by the eleven participating communities, plus the NRWA and the NPS. The Council will implement the locally-developed *Stewardship Plan*.

Less than one-quarter of 1% of the rivers in the nation are protected under the National Wild and Scenic River Act. “We’re excited that the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers are being designated,” stated Jamie Fosburgh, Manager, Northeast Region Rivers Program for the National Park Service. “This river system represents an outstanding addition to the nation’s Wild and Scenic Rivers.”

For more information contact Al Futterman, Study Committee Coordinator at alf@NashuaRiverWatershed.org. For information about this project and to read the *Stewardship Plan*: www.WildandScenicNashuaRivers.org.

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