

Nashua River “Wild and Scenic” River Study Committee

Sections of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers

www.WildandScenicNashuaRivers.org

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Wild and Scenic River Study?

A congressionally authorized study to determine whether a particular river is eligible and suitable for designation as a National Wild and Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act which was enacted by Congress in 1968. The process is entirely voluntary and in the hands of the local community members who are members of the Study Committee.

Isn't Wild and Scenic Designation Geared Toward Federally Owned, Western Rivers?

Many of the originally designated rivers were out west, but there are several rivers designated in New England by the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. The Partnership Program helps communities create a local Study Committee to research the river, and works with land in private ownership.

What is a Wild and Scenic River Study Committee?

This Study Committee includes members from each of the eight Massachusetts towns in the study area: Ayer, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Pepperell, Shirley and Townsend. The official appointees were appointed by the town Selectboards. There are also partner organizations on the Committee including: the MA Division of Fish and Game, MA Division of Ecological Restoration, the National Park Service, US Geological Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Nashua River Watershed Association. Others are participating informally. The mission of the committee is to gather information about resources along the rivers, protections which currently exist for these resources, and information about whether the local community understands and supports designation.

What Parts of the Rivers are Being Considered for Wild and Scenic Designation?

The Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers are being studied in the eight towns listed above. During the time of the study the tributaries are studied as well.

How Would the River be Designated Wild and Scenic?

In order to be designated, the Study Committee must show that there are outstandingly remarkable values which are of regional, national, or state-wide significance. The Study Committee is currently determining if the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers have these values. The Study Committee must also show community support for designation. This will be accomplished through meetings and discussion with community members, and ultimately by a vote at town meeting in each of the eight towns. If both of these are demonstrated, then legislation is brought to Congress, and if passed signed into law by the President.

Does Designation Mean My Land Will Be Under Federal Control?

No. The federal government does not take control of the rivers which are designated.

What is the Management Plan?

The Study Committee develops a Management Plan during their three year river study. This plan is a compilation of the information collected during the study, and designed to help communities understand the resources and protections which exist for their river, and the recommendations gathered by the Study Committee. This plan is a non-regulatory “blueprint”, and the management strategies would be

implemented through education and outreach.

What Effects May Result from Wild and Scenic River Designation?

- If designated, it is expected that Congress would appropriate funds for implementation of the Management Plan and projects to preserve the identified recreational, scenic, historic, cultural, and natural resources
- Landowners would still be the stewards of their lands.
- If attracting tourists is a goal, designation could be a great marketing tool for local businesses and regions supporting ecotourism.
- Applications for grants may be more competitive in the areas designated Wild & Scenic.
- A local Advisory Committee would be established to oversee the designation funds, and provide outreach for the recommendations in the Management Plan.
- This Committee would have input during the review of any federally funded or permitted projects related to the river. These types of projects would be reviewed even without designation, but designation provides more local input into the permitting of these projects.
- The Wild and Scenic Act was created at a time of large-scale dam building. In an effort to balance dammed rivers with those which were free-flowing, there is a stipulation in the Act which prevents the establishment of new dams or hydro facilities on the designated portion of the river. This does not affect pre-existing, permitted hydro facilities such as those in Ayer and Pepperell MA. It also does not prevent existing dams from being retrofitted for purposes other than hydro.

As a Riverfront Landowner, Will Designation Mean New Regulations or Permits?

No. Local land use remains controlled by the local laws including town laws and zoning. The town's laws and regulations would continue to govern private property rights.

What Impacts Will There Be to Projects with Federal Funding?

Designation requires that any federally funded or permitted projects related to the river be consistent with the preservation of the natural, cultural and recreational values for which the river was designated. The National Park Service and local Advisory Committee implement this provision through review and comment on such federally assisted projects, utilizing the Management Plan and its goals as a frame of reference. Examples would include dredge and fill permits of the Army Corps of Engineers, significant water diversions, channelization proposals, or other "water resource development" proposals. These protections are in place on a temporary basis as a part of the Study.

Will Designation Help Bring Funding to the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit River Communities?

Historically there have been annual appropriations from Congress to the local Advisory Committees of designated rivers. Also, designation may make grant proposals more desirable, or partnerships with other local or state organizations possible.

Will Hunting and Fishing Be Affected?

No. Hunting and fishing laws are unaffected by the designation.

Contact Information:

More information is available on our website www.WildandScenicNashuaRivers.org including the local Study Committee members from your town.

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