NASHUA RIVER
WILD & SCENIC
STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
Nashua • Squannacook • Nissitissit Rivers

NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

Update to Town Select Boards – October 2021

This report highlights some of the accomplishments in an exciting and productive first year of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council.

Community Grants Program

In 2020, we kicked off the Community Grants Program that offers small grants to support projects demonstrating commitment towards protecting the rivers' resources and building local stewardship in accordance with the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan. We issued an RFP and application form in December and received many excellent applications. In April 2021, we awarded $20,000 in funding to six projects. Grant recipients have made the following progress to date:

- Ayer Conservation Commission received $4,800 for Public Education Signage for Ayer's Waterways and Ponds. This project will place attractive and informative signs along roads and on bridges to help residents and visitors see and appreciate the ponds and streams of Ayer. They have finalized the draft sign designs w graphic designer, set up QR code pages, identified and marked ten locations for signs, and worked with MA DOT to make sure sign designs meet all guidelines. They plan to install the signs by the end of October.

- Bolton Conservation Commission received $2,550 for the Forbush Mill Still River Trail, which will connect a newly acquired 43-acre property to an existing sports field and parking area. An intern completed mapping and GPS tracking, created signage, and cleared the trail along Forbush Mill Road and the Still River. Temporary educational signs were installed. The Conservation Agent is finalizing the connection between the two properties by coordinating with adjacent property owners and install permanent signage along the trail.

- Brookline Conservation Commission received $3,300 for the Nissitissit River Tree Project. Funding will be used to plant maple trees along a section of the Nissitissit River to enhance the tree canopy and help maintain the cold water fishery. The Commission is waiting to coordinate with a sidewalk installation project.

- Pepperell Select Board received $4,000 to start up the Pepperell Invasive Plant Advisory Committee. The funded project has been completed and a final grant report submitted. The newly-formed Advisory Committee completed training in identification and management, purchased equipment for invasive plant removal, and finalized a Strategic Management Plan.

- The Town of Townsend received $3,850 to protect the Squannacook River by restricting motor vehicle access along the river bank at Adams Dam and encouraging pedestrian access from the public parking lot at Jefts St. Permitting has been completed, DEP file number obtained, and Orders of Conditions received. The Cemetery & Parks Department is preparing to begin gate installation.

- Townsend Historical Society received $1,500 to support preservation and revitalization of the Spaulding Cooperage, a historical and cultural landmark on the Squannacook River. The Society has interviewed several historical architects in their search for a restoration contractor.

The Stewardship Council will offer the grant program again this year.

Forest Legacy

The Stewardship Council has submitted an application to the federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP). This program, administered by the U.S. Forest Service and The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), identifies and conserves important forest areas threatened by conversion, through acquisition of conservation easements or fee interests.

Al Futterman, Project Coordinator for the Stewardship Council and NRWA Land Programs and Outreach Director, and Janet Morrison, Land Conservation Consultant, presented the proposal to the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Committee on July 21, 2021. The state committee endorsed the application, which was submitted for review at the national level on October 18, 2021.

The FLP application is by far the most intensive and impactful project undertaken by the Stewardship Council. The FLP Steering Committee reached out to landowners and identified almost 2,500 acres comprised of 25 tracts to include in the application, for a total land value estimated at $14.4 million. Seven of the Wild & Scenic River towns have tracts included in this application. Many partners were involved in this effort, including the NRWA, watershed towns, local land trusts, DCR, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game.

Other Highlights

The Stewardship Council hosted Conservation Network Breakfasts, in which regional experts from state agencies and environmental businesses delivered well-received talks via Zoom for Conservation Agents and other conservation professionals. Topics included habitat protection, fluvial geomorphology, headwater streams, and Sucker Brook restoration in Pepperell.

Council members engaged in several land stewardship projects, including a brochure for riparian landowners, outreach and signage to control ATV use on conservation lands, an invasives "tool kit" for towns and interested citizen groups, and continued effort to identify a suitable canoe launch on the Nashua River in Ayer.

The March issue of the National Park Service's publication *River Currents* featured New England Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers, including an article about our Shoreline Surveys on the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers.

The Council reviewed and approved comment letters from the NRWA on several local projects that affect our watershed, including support for fish passage in the FERC license renewal for the Mine Falls dam and repairs to the Jackson Mills dam in Nashua; and support for funding the National Park Service budget for Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers by the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

Council members also attended hearings for the Stratton Hill Subdivision in Ayer and the proposed restoration of approximately 180 acres of the Squannacook Wildlife Management Area to barren habitat by the Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The Stewardship Council meets every third Thursday of the month at 7:00, currently by Zoom. Meetings are open to the public. For more information, visit the Wild and Scenic Rivers website: www.WildandScenicNashuaRivers.org.