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

NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

2022 Report to Town Select Boards

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

Community Grants Program

In 2022 we offered the second year of our Community Grants Program to support projects that protect the rivers' resources and build local stewardship in accordance with the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan. **We awarded a total of $38,546 for nine projects**:

Organization	Amount	Community Project
People of Ayer Concerned About the Environment (PACE)	$4,995	**AYER Community PULL! A Campaign to Remove Water Chestnuts at Grove Pond**. The grant funded laboratory tests for possible contaminants in Grove Pond and a community-wide removal program of invasive water chestnuts.
Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC)	$6,930	**Beautify and Improve Access to Nashua River in Ayer**. DEC partnered with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and Town of Ayer to beautify and improve a parking area at the junction of Bishop and McPherson Roads with interpretive and wayfinding signs, a bike rack, and a pollinator garden.
Groton Invasive Species Committee	$2,540	**Managing and Monitoring the Invasive Plant Japanese Knotweed on the Nashua River**. Grant funding was used to help reduce the knotweed populations and restore native plant communities at two locations along the Nashua River.
Town of Harvard	$2,500	**Harvard Waterways and Watershed Awareness**. Funds were used for signage along Bowers Brook, a tributary of the Nashua River, and a map of the town's waterways, wetlands, and watersheds.
Lancaster Land Trust	$5,000	**Cook Conservation Parking Area**. This grant supported expansion and resurfacing of the Cook Conservation dirt parking area in Lancaster along the Nashua River.
Pepperell Invasive & Native Plant Advisory Committee (INPAC)	$3,625	**Mapping Invasive Plants Near Stream Culverts**. Funds from this grant supported geographic information system (GIS) mapping of invasive plants on town properties near tributaries of the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers. Funds were also used to purchase native plant seeds for restoration following invasives removal.
Shirley Select Board	$4,423	**Fredonian Park Invasive Plant Removal and Management Plan**. Funds were used for volunteer training and removal of invasive plants at Fredonian Park and Nature Center, as well as development of a strategic management plan for ongoing stewardship.

Organization	Amount	Community Project
Squannacook Greenways, Inc.	$4,000	**Stabilize Canoe Launch on Townsend Harbor Pond**. Grant funding was used to improve a canoe and kayak launch by stabilizing with crushed stone. The project also included creation of an infiltration ditch filled with crushed stone and parking lot repair to prevent storm water and sediment from being washed into Harbor Pond.
Town of Townsend	$4,533	**Adams Dam**. This grant funded a comprehensive assessment for sustainable stabilization and protection of the bank and waterway at Adams Dam on the Squannacook River, including guidance for best practices for future recreation and stewardship of this Town-owned property.

Land Protection Grants Program

In 2022 we kicked off a new grants program to further local conservation efforts by providing funds to support acquisition, transaction, and other due diligence costs associated with land protection. **We awarded funding for two projects**:

Organization	Amount	Land Protection Project
Town of Brookline NH Conservation Commission	$10,000	This grant supported the acquisition of four parcels, either abutting protected town land or within a corridor designated for protection.
Townsend Conservation Land Trust, Inc (TCLT)	$10,000	This grant funded surveys of three TCLT properties in preparation for conveying these properties to North County Land Trust.

Forest Legacy Program

The federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP) 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.

The Stewardship Council submitted an application to the program in 2021. Our application ranked #22 out of 44 applications, but the President's Budget funded only the first 15 projects. The Council unanimously approved moving forward with a new application in 2022.

The Forest Legacy Program Steering Committee, a subcommittee of the Stewardship Council, submitted a revised application to DCR's Forest Legacy Committee in September, which was unanimously approved to proceed for national review by the Forest Service. The Stewardship Council may know if the revised application has been funded when the President's Budget is released in March 2023.

Conservation Network Breakfasts

The Stewardship Council continued to host Zoom events in which regional experts from state agencies and environmental businesses delivered presentations to Conservation Agents and other conservation professionals. 2022 topics included Farmland of Local Importance and Nature Based Solutions (in conjunction with NRWA's Climate Impact Committee).

NPS/USGS Dragonfly Mercury Project

The Stewardship Council participated in a nation-wide study sponsored by the National Park Service and USGS to determine the level of mercury in rivers based on the levels found in Dragonfly larvae and skeletons. During the first three weeks in September, members of the Stewardship Council, NRWA staff, and volunteers collected larvae samples at the West Groton Water Supply District land on the Squannacook River, the Millie Turner dam site on the Nissitissit River, and the boat launch at the Marion Stoddart Conservation Area on the Nashua River. The samples were packed in dry ice and sent to a laboratory in Oregon for analysis of mercury levels, with results expected in spring or summer 2023.

Other Projects

The Council hosted a Zoom workshop on invasive plants in May, followed by a field workshop in June.

Council members monitored activity and commented on the Stratton Hill Subdivision in Ayer and the proposed restoration of approximately 180 acres of the Squannacook Wildlife Management Area to oak woodlands 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.