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

NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

2023 Annual Report

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

Our Community Grants Program continued to support projects that protect the rivers' resources and build local stewardship in accordance with the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan. **In 2023, we awarded a total of $27,268 for eight projects. Grantee organizations committed over $143,000 worth of matching funds and volunteer hours from local communities.**

Organization	Amount	Community Project
People of Ayer Concerned About the Environment (PACE)	$4,490	**AYER Community PULL!** A campaign to remove water chestnuts at Grove Pond.
Groton Trails Committee	$2.500	**Nashua Riverwalk Educational Signage.** An accessible 0.2 mile extension of the John Tinker Trail in the J. Harry Rich State Forest.
Town of Harvard	$1,050	**Harvard Waterways and Watershed Awareness.** The first step in a long-term project to restore hydrologic connectivity by upgrading or replacing culverts.
Harvard Conservation Trust	$2,425	**Harvard Crescent Valley Boardwalk Project.** Construction of a boardwalk across ecologically sensitive wetlands on the Crescent Valley Trail.
Pepperell Invasive & Native Plant Advisory Committee (INPAC)	$3,000	**Invasive Plant Management Support.** Removal of invasive plants along four culvert ditches, garlic mustard removal along town roads and on private land, and a town-wide mailing about invasive plants.
Shirley Select Board	$5,225	**Fredonian Park Riparian Restoration Project**. Invasive plant removal and native plantings along Fredonian Pond and Catacunemaug Brook.
Town of Townsend	$2,263	**Townsend Non-Native Invasive Plant Training at Adams Dam Area.** Training for town employees and volunteers on identification and removal of invasive plants.
World Farmers, Inc.	$6,315	**Restoring the Natural Flow of Floodwaters off Flats Mentor Farm onto Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area.** Engineering and planning to restore natural flow of seasonal flood waters off a farm used by immigrant, small-scale vegetable farmers.

Land Protection Grants Program

The Council continued our 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 $35,208 in funding for three projects**. **Grantee organizations committed almost $11,000 worth of matching funds and volunteer hours from local communities.**

Organization	Amount	Land Protection Project
Harvard Conservation Trust	$19,956	**Coke Land Restoration**. Large-scale invasives plant removal, native plant re-introduction, and wildlife habitat restoration on 27 acres.
North County Land Trust	$2,252	**Property Survey and Monumenting**. Land survey on Northfield Road to protect frontage to the Peabody Conservation Area property, which protects over 620 feet of Mulpus Brook.
Shirley Conservation Commission	$13,000	**Western Wildlife Corridor Burrage Rd. Acquisition.** Due diligence costs for acquisition and protection of 24.74 acres of land with significant ecological and recreational value, and for protection of town water supply.

Forest Legacy Program

The Council was awarded $8.6 million through the US Forest Service Forest Legacy Project (FLP), to be matched by another $3.9 million in non-federal cost share for a total of $12.5 million in funding. This will be used to conserve 2,098 acres in 20 forested tracts throughout our Wild & Scenic Rivers watershed. Our project ranked 6th out of 26 applications submitted nationally, a testimony to the need to protect our forested lands in an area under growing development pressure. The project is the result of a strong partnership with public and private conservation entities.

Interpretive Signs

The Council engaged the services of an illustrator and a graphic artist to design informational signs about the Wild & Scenic Rivers program and the Stewardship Council. Each sign will feature a map of the rivers and attractive artwork portraying typical species found in the local habitat. Three signs are planned for the first year of this project, to be installed (upon final approval) in Brookline at the fishing pier overlooking the Nissitissit River, in Townsend along the Squannacook River near Adams Dam, and along the Nashua River at the Petapawag boat launch in Groton.

Regional Conservation Planning Workshop

The Council is hosting a series of facilitated workshops for state, municipal, and private conservation organizations with management responsibility or other interest in the protected lands along each Wild & Scenic river corridor. In July, we kicked off the series with a workshop focused on the Squannacook River corridor. More than 30 attendees from Groton, Shirley, Townsend, and the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation discussed the regional impact of their land management in areas such as land acquisition, trail connectivity, and managing invasives.

In December, the Council hosted a second workshop, on the Nissitissit River corridor. A third workshop, on the Nashua River corridor is being planned for late January 2024. Final reports from each session are posted on the Council's website. Follow-up working sessions on topics of common interest will be offered in the coming year.

NPS/USGS Dragonfly Mercury Project

In August, 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. Participants collected samples from the Squannacook, Nissitissit, and Nashua Rivers, which were submitted for laboratory testing of mercury. This was our second year of participating and we hope to continue, as it will help build a profile of the health of our rivers.

River Canoe Access & Recreation Charrette

In September, the Council hosted a 2 ½ day event to share ideas about improved canoe access to the rivers. Conducted in partnership with the River Management Society, NRWA, and Nashoba Paddler, the well-attended free event included classroom training and field work. Working in small groups, attendees developed proposals for improved access at the Beaver Brook Association land in Hollis along the Nissitissit River (adjacent to W. Hollis and Worcester Roads) and Petapawag along the Nashua River in Groton.

Other Council Projects

- Continued to host Network Gatherings and webinars, including several in conjunction with the NRWA Climate Impact Committee.
- Sponsored efforts to pull water chestnuts in various locations on the Nashua River.
- Upgraded the Council's website.
- Sponsored "Wild Inside" free programs developed and presented by NRWA staff.

About the Wild & Scenic Stewardship program

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers have a 20+ year track record of empowering communities along the rivers to protect these resources while maintaining the rights of landowners and residents.

In 2019, sections of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers were designated as Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council, with volunteer representatives from eleven riverfront towns, has a mission to protect, preserve, and enhance these special resources in keeping with a Stewardship Plan.

Funding for Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council is provided through the National Park Service under CFDA: 15.921 – Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic River Assistance.

https://www.wildandscenicnashuarivers.org/

Current Stewardship Council Members

Ayer MA: Beth Suedmeyer (rep / Treasurer) & Robert Pontbriand (alt)
Bolton MA: Rona Balco (rep) & Rebecca Longvall Bucciaglia (alt)
Brookline NH: Drew Kellner (rep) & Greg Martin (alt)
Dunstable MA: Marijan Andacic (rep) & Kate DeLoureiro (alt)
Groton MA: Stacey Chilcoat (rep) & Diane Carson (alt)
Harvard MA: Lucy Wallace (rep / Chair) & Michele Girard (alt)
Hollis NH: Bernadette McQuilkin (rep) & Laura Bianco (alt)
Lancaster MA: Justin Smith (rep)
Pepperell MA: Paula Terrasi (rep)
Shirley MA: Heidi Ricci (rep / Vice Chair) & Hans Onsager (alt)
Townsend MA: Joan Wotkowicz (rep / Secretary)

Nashua River Watershed Association:
Jennifer Keegan (rep), Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold (alt), Martha Morgan
National Park Service: Emma Lord
Devens Enterprise Commission: Neil Angus (rep) & Deb Seeley (alt)
MA Division of Fish and Wildlife: Patricia Huckery (rep)
Non-voting members include representatives from MA Division of Ecological Restoration, MA Division of Fish & Wildlife, US Fish & Wildlife Service (as available), and US Geological Survey (as available)
Participating guests include local and regional resource experts from Massachusetts and New Hampshire.