

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

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**Warner River Nomination:
Town of Bradford Public Information Session**

Wednesday, November 17, 2016

Bradford Area Community Center, 134 East Main Street, Bradford, NH 03221

7:00 P.M.

Minutes:

| Attendees | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Chris Connors, Trout Unlimited | Sue Hemingway, Town of Warner |
| Scott MacLean, Town of Bradford | Nancy Martin, Town of Warner |
| Jack Noon, Town of Sutton | Michael Simon, Town of Warner |

Members of the Public: Connie and Bob Brooks, Michele Halsted (Rural Heritage Connection of Bradford, Inc.), David Halsted, Judy Anderson.

Commission Staff: Sam Durfee

The Information Session Presentation began at 7:05 P.M, convened by Nancy Martin. Committee Members and supporting representatives were introduced and a brief summary of the history of the Nomination committee’s process was provided.

Nomination Presentation: given by Sam Durfee

TITLE SLIDE 1: Title slide showing the scenic value of the Warner River

SLIDE 1: Impetus & Progress – an overview of NH F&G and Basil Woods Trout Unlimited Warner River Watershed Conservation Project revealed that 2/3rds of the streams in the watershed contain wild brook trout indicating a watershed of high water quality. This fact encouraged the Warner Conservation Commission to reach out to CNHRPC for assistance in nominating the Warner River to NH’s Rivers Management & Protection Program. New England Grassroots Fund provided grant to enable this process. Having completed the nomination document and a draft map of the designated corridor and classifications, we are reaching out to all five towns to get feedback from the communities. Provided timeline going forward.

SLIDE 2: What Nomination into the RMPP Process means.

SLIDE 3: The 18 Designated Rivers throughout NH, includes the Contocook River to which the Warner River is a tributary.

SLIDE 4: Why Designate? Economic value of our surface water (change in water clarity and purity could result in 8.3% loss in sales and \$3 million in lost income for Merrimack Valley region; Local Advisory Committee (LAC) set up representing the five towns offers many benefits and would be first group dedicated to the river. A river's management plan would be assembled.

Mr. Simon interjected to explain that the river management plan that would be drawn up by the LAC would be advisory in nature as opposed to a master plan which is binding.

Question from audience – the Contoocook River is nominated or designated? Mr. Durfee explained that once nominated the rivers are known as designated and that the Contoocook and North Branch Rivers are already designated.

Overview of local zoning, Shoreland water Quality and Protection Act. Ms. Martin handed out sheets that compare Bradford's local ordinances to the SWQPA. RMPP has separate guidelines and does not supersede local ordinances.

SLIDE 5: Overview of LAC Services & Responsibilities – permit reviews and advisory comments, grant assistance and priority award; septic smart workshops; invasive species management

SLIDE 6: Overview of Projects implemented by existing LACs

SLIDE 7: Resources provided by the Warner River (Hydroelectric Power, high-ranking kayaking)

SLIDE 8: Historical Resources (credit Rebecca Courser, Warner Historical Society)

SLIDE 9: Protecting Natural Resources for Future Generations – projected loss of privately held forests, increase in future development and climate change led Forest Service to identify the Contoocook Watershed as second most threatened in the nation to undergo a change in water quality.

SLIDE 10: River Health in the Context of Climate Change – biodiversity, healthy riparian corridor and flooding

SLIDE 11: The Draft Warner River Nomination Proposed Classifications Map – community sections expanded to accommodate concerned owners of existing and old dam/mill sites.

Ms. Martin asked Mr. Durfee to explain the difference between the rural, rural community and community segments.

See the full presentation here: <https://warnerrivernomination.wordpress.com/our-calendar/>

Public Question & Answer Period

- How would grandfathered sites be affected? We have two permitted junk yard sites along the river, how would these be affected by this process, if at all? (unknown audience)

Mr. Durfee responded that these facilities are already subject to the SWQPA. As they are already established, the RMPP cannot affect them.

- If they wanted to expand their operations?

Mr. Durfee explained that in a rural community segment, as Bradford's river segment is currently shown, they are allowed to expand their operations outside 500' of the river's high water mark.

Mr. Simon comment that the facilities are still subject to the SWQPA.

Mr. Simon also asked Sam to include information about the natural segment classification that requires 5 miles. This is 20 miles, so trying to get a natural segment would be difficult.

- For the habitat question, for example, the West Branch has wood turtles. If you find species of concern, do certain protective measures kick in to protect them? (unknown audience) No, Mr. Durfee explained. Although in the nomination document, we are required to provide information about all the species of concern as well as all known species present. He recommended folks look at the document to read this section. Chris Connors, a landscape professional, spoke up to explain that all developments filing application at the state and federal level are required to produce reports on whether rare, threatened and endangered species are present and that an LAC, and other organizations could assist in protecting these species.

- I live right at the top (most upstream portion of the classified river segment) (confluence of Andrew Brook and West Branch Warner River) and I have looked at the maps, but find them ambiguous in trying to determine whether all or part of my property lies within the ¼ mile buffer. (unknown audience) Mr. Durfee explained that the proposed river corridor begins at the confluence of Andrew Brook and West Branch. The buffer shown is the statutory ¼ mile buffer. The dams shown here (pointing to map), are not on the Warner River, but just shown as they exist in these locations. They will not be affected by this project.

- What's the difference between outside the buffer and inside the buffer? Relatively little, the buffer essentially shows the scope of what a river management plan would address. Identifies what is within this buffer, what community facilities are there, and what hazards exist. The real focus of the nomination and designation and the legislation associated with it, is the river itself.

And so what I think he is asking, because the dam is not on the Warner River, it would not be subject to the nomination? (Nancy Martin) Or the river classifications.

- We lived in NJ before we came here, and certain creeks were designated to be 'under stress', and riparian buffers were required to be planted. One of the unintended consequences that occurred is that it separated visually and psychologically the river from those who cared for it, so instead of walking along a river anymore, you walked along a screen of dense foliage. Will this program negatively impact my property in this kind of way? Mr. Durfee explained that the property is subject to the SWQPA, but these do not retroactively impose these standards, so your house is grandfathered. The SWQPA mandates a 50' natural riparian buffer along the river's edge. This project would not affect your property whatsoever.

Mr. Simon spoke up to say that this program does not require anything beyond what the Bradford zoning and SWQPA already require. An LAC cannot require something that is not already required.

- In NJ, the status enabled regulations that were then imposed.

Mr. Durfee replied that we don't really do that that way here.

Chris Connors pointed out that there are some cases where the RMPP does require plantings, but only under one circumstance. She located and read from RSA 483:9-aa, VII. (a) concerning new solid waste landfills... must be '*screened from the river with a vegetative or other natural buffer to minimize visual impact;*..' so it's kind of the reverse. Mr. Durfee added that this program deals with solid waste facilities, hazardous waste facilities and that it really does not go into the residential realm.

- One of our projects, I'm representing the Rural Community Heritage Programs of Bradford, which has a dual mandate: one for conservation of open space, and town lands of ecological and recreational significance, and the other is historical preservation. One of our long-term projects is to build a recreational trail in the rail bed along the Warner River and I wondered if you are working with Tim Blagden and others? The overall goal is to link Lake Sunapee to Concord for cross country skiing, bicycle riding, horseback riding and Bradford is hoping there would be snowmobiles would be permitted to use this trail. I am wondering if this Designation would make it easier for us to obtain grants? (Michele Halsted)

Mr. Simon spoke up to say that that is one of the advantages of this effort being a five town effort and that the LAC could add support to local projects. This group currently is the group assembled to prepare the nomination, but once designation is achieved, the LAC could assist this and other groups with their efforts. Mr. Durfee commented that their office very supportive of this rail trail project. The RMPP supports recreation and in terms of snowmobile use, not a problem. Ms. Martin asked if the organization would write a letter of support for the nomination to which Ms. Halsted agreed.

Upon no more questions, Mr. Durfee concluded that there were many documents available for the group to peruse and that more information is available on our website (www.warnerrivernomination.wordpress.com) which also has our email contact information.

Mr. Durfee also said he loves making maps so that if anyone wanted to see something mapped out in particular he would be happy to do so.

Informal conversation continued.

The meeting concluded around 8:15pm.