

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

28 Commercial Street, Suite #3

Concord, NH, 03301

Tel: (603) 226-6020

Fax: (603) 226-6023

www.cnhrpc.org



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

Thursday, November 21, 2016

Sutton Town Hall, 93 Main St, Sutton Mills, NH 03278

6:30 P.M.

Minutes:

Attendees	
Chris Connors, Trout Unlimited	George Embley, Town of Webster
Nancy Martin, Town of Warner	Jack Noon, Town of Sutton
Michael Simon, Town of Warner	

Members of the Public: Betsy Forsham, Glen Davis

Commission Staff: Sam Durfee

The Information Session Presentation began at 6:35 P.M, convened by Nancy Martin. Mrs. Martin introduced Betsy Forsham, Chair of the Sutton Conservation Commission. 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.

SLIDE 5: Overview of LAC Services & Responsibilities

SLIDE 6: Overview of Projects implemented by existing LACs

SLIDE 7: Resources provided by the Warner River (Hydroelectric Power, 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

SLIDE 11: The Draft Warner River Nomination Proposed Classifications Map

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

Public Question & Answer Period

Betsy Forsham, Nancy Martin and Jack Noon discussed that the LAC, formed of all five towns, would greatly benefit each town by raising awareness about the river.

A gentleman asked about the designated Warner River corridor and how the River's tributaries would be affected. Sam explained that some towns elect to nominate the main stems of the river as well as tributaries, explaining that the Contoocook River nomination included the North Branch as well. He further explained that only the main stem of the Warner River (as shown) is affected and the tributaries outside of the designated corridor would not be impacted by the criteria of the designation.

George Embley pointed out, however, that the local advisory committee (LAC) could look out for the entire watershed, as they would be responsible for producing a watershed management plan and could make recommendations for the river's tributaries, for example assist towns by performing annual water quality monitoring (or VRAP, volunteer river assessment program).

Sam further explained that the designation would not have any impact on tributary dams, either. The focus of this nomination is to protect the quarter-mile designated corridor from adverse development (like expansion of waste treatment facilities, salt and hazardous materials storage, etc.)

Well, what about manure? Sam explained that the Shoreland Quality Protection Act regulated this, although Nancy Martin brought up that both loggers and farmers are exempt from following the criteria of the Shoreland Quality Protection Act. Chris Connors commented that this is correct, but they are bound to follow Best Management Practices (BMP's) and that brand new forestry BMP's were put out recently and NRCS puts forth the BMPs for agriculture.

Sam commented that this project is a way of looking at a river in a different way. By bringing towns together around the river, these towns put emphasis on protecting the river resource collectively.

A gentleman wanted clarification about the exception of agriculture. Nancy Martin said *commercial* agriculture is somewhat of a grey area because when someone hays their fields and sell the hay, is this commercial agriculture? Sam responded that the state's RSA's 21:34a defines agriculture, but he thinks this is broader.

Conversation continued by Sam explaining that the LAC could make recommendations to the Planning Board to adopt certain setbacks if there is a particular problem in a certain area. Chris Connors pointed out that the water quality testing would help reveal problem areas. Issues of algae would trigger violations of Clean Water Act requirements, thus trigger EPA funding availability.

Betsy Forsham indicated that it is interesting how a local clear-cut of 40-50 acres (to turn land back into pasture) can have such a great impact (on streams). Fortunately they are stumping and seeding. Nancy Martin is hopeful that as time passes we are becoming smarter, and if we have water quality testing, then this will let us know where the issues are. People are very interested in keeping the quality of the water high.

Sam presented a prepared sheet with a comparison of Sutton's local zoning regulations and the existing state regulations as well as what would change with the Warner River designation.

Chris Connors brought up that what she found interesting in reading the five town's hazard mitigation plans, is that Warner is actually quite vulnerable in so far as what happens in the (upstream) towns. What happens in the tributaries of Bradford, Sutton and Newbury can severely affect the Warner River as it passes thru Warner. If Lock Linden dam, Lake Massasecum dam and Lake Todd dam were to breach (or any one, separately), there may result severe consequences for Warner. It was interesting to read all the town hazard mitigation plans and learn how differently each town ranked their hazards (i.e. high risks for various hazards associated with their rivers/stream were assigned very differently). No matter what, each of these town's is connected by the watershed streams and what a benefit it would be to have a committee that looks at these vulnerabilities and strengths of this mutual relationship.

Without further questions, Nancy thanked the Sutton Select board for having already submitted a letter of support, but asked if Sutton Conservation Commission would consider doing so? Betsy asked if there was a sample letter the commission could use for reference, and Sam agreed he would email same.

In conclusion, Sam let everyone know the project website (www.warnerriverdesignation.wordpress.com) and email address (wrnomination@gmail.com), should anyone want to reference further information or have any further questions.

Discussion continued with Nancy mentioning that NHDOT has put in an application to NHDES to replace the bridge in over the Warner River in Davisville. Chris Connors said this is a positive action on the State's part as that particular location was vulnerable during the Mother's Day Storm.

Betsy Forsham brought up that a member of their commission has been very proactive in pursuing a rain garden be built at KRHS to mitigate parking lot run off to protect a valuable brook trout stream on the school property. Students have dug out huge amounts of earth by hand to aid stormwater infiltration and several local businesses stepped up to donate materials to assist in the project. The kids are learning all sorts of things about trout and how pollution enters our waters.

Nancy Martin concluded the meeting at 7:20pm and thanked everyone for attending.