

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 Webster Public Information Session**

Wednesday, November 29, 2016

Webster Town Hall, Route 127, Webster NH 03

7:00 P.M.

Minutes:

Attendees	
Nancy Martin, Town of Warner	George Embley, Town of Webster
Michael Simon, Town of Warner	Jack Noon, Town of Sutton

Members of the Public: Sally Embley, Webster Conservation Commission, Dan and Karen Moran, riverside residents; Kim Fortine, riverside resident.

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 (RMPP). 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

Discussion of river classifications and impact on possible reconstruction of the Davisville dam.

Dan and Karen Moran now own the property, known as “The Dynamo,” once the property of Contoocook Power and Light. They questioned draft Warner River classifications regarding their concerns about the impact on their property if the dam owner ever decides to reconstruct the dam built on that site in the late 1700’s. The dam owner, John Warren, lives in Boston, visits his riverside home in Webster occasionally, and was sent a second letter of invitation to this information session. He is not attending this meeting.

Mr. Durfee mentioned how the Warner River designation would initiate creation of a Local Advisory Committee that would have advisory powers only. The NH Shoreline Protection Act and Webster’s planning and zoning regulations would supersede any recommendations made by the LAC, a body that has no regulatory power whatsoever. In fact, planning and zoning regs in most of the five towns along the river are more restrictive with regards to setbacks from the river that even the NH Shoreline Protection Act.

When discussing competing demands for use of the river, agricultural uses and water withdrawal came up. Nancy Martin said that both agricultural and loggings activities are exempt from the Shoreline Protection Act and the RMPP. Few local community ordinances have addressed the impact on water bodies of agriculture and logging activities. With regards to water withdrawal, once an entity withdrawing water surpasses a certain volume, NH DES requires registration by the entity. Mr. Durfee continued by saying that “All facilities that use more than 20,000 gallons of water per day, averaged over a seven-day period, must register with DES.” More information is provided by this fact sheet: <http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/documents/dwgb-22-31.pdf>]

Can the boundaries of the proposed classification segments on the river be changed after the river is adopted into the program? Kim Fortine.

Mr. Durfee replied that there may be a formal procedure for doing this, however there is no record of the classification segments being changed after the legislature formally adopts the river into the RSA 483. He further explained that this is why the committee is reaching out to the five communities for their input. The Nomination Committee has already made changes on river classifications based on public input received in information sessions like this one. The premise of the nomination program is to allow communities to define and apply the appropriate protections to preserve the resource into the future.

Kim Fortine brought a document, a state statute from the 1800's, that gives the City of Concord jurisdiction over the Warner River in Webster and the whole town as an agricultural district of Concord. She questions how this statute, still in effect, could impact future recommendations made by a Warner River Local Advisory Committee (LAC), if the nomination of the river is successful next year in the NH legislature. Sam Durfee responded that an LAC with representatives from five towns would be a much more effective voice in decisions about the Warner River should this old statute ever become an issue. Kim commented on how the Currier and Ives Scenic Byways designation along Route 127 in Webster has injected the federal government into Webster town issues.

This designation protects the Warner River, but what will it do to protect the streams that support the wild brook trout population? The discussion turned to protecting native trout in stream tributaries feeding the Warner River. Mr. Durfee explained that he believed that by increasing protection along the main stem, this would also result in protection for these streams. Ms. Martin commented that maintaining a cold water environment by limiting the cutting of brush and trees that provide shade along the bank supports healthy fish habitat. The Morans made reference to the fish they see in the nearby Warner River that support blue herons in the area.

What is the timeline of this process? Mr. Durfee explained that the timeline follows the legislative calendar, so for 2017 the formal nomination document would be submitted to the Commissioner of NHDES June 1, 2017. If the Commissioner finds the nomination worthy, then a public hearing is held. If enough support is received for the nomination, then the nomination is approved by DES and forwarded to the legislature for their approval in the form of an amendment to RSA 483. Upon passage in the legislature, the governor signs the nomination and RSA 483 is amended to include the Warner River as a Designated River in the NH River Management and Protection Program.

Templates for Letters of Support from Local Organizations and Individuals were passed around to audience members as examples that interested individuals and agencies might use to support the project and be incorporated into the Nomination Document before submission to the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) and the NH legislature in 2017.

Without further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm