

Warner River Nomination: July 11th Public Hearing Summary



After over a year and a half of monthly meetings, an extensive public outreach campaign and the submission of a nomination document to NH Department of Environmental Services (DES), a formal public hearing was held by DES in Warner on Tuesday, July 11th.

The project is an effort to nominate the Warner River which runs through Bradford, Warner, Sutton, Webster, and Hopkinton, to the NH DES River's Management and Protection Program (RMPP). Upon designation of the Warner River, the program would allow for the creation of a Local River Management Advisory Committee (LAC) which would be able to comment on development proposals within a quarter mile of banks of the river. This program was established in 1988 to provide greater local control of valuable river resources.

During the afternoon of the 11th, members of DES, the nominating committee and the Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC), a sixteen-member committee appointed by the Governor and Executive Council to aid DES in administering the RMPP, participated in a tour of the Warner River. The group made several stops to view the river and talk about many of the resources outlined in the nomination document which is available on RMPP section of the DES website. Following the tour and becoming acquainted with the river, the public hearing began at 6:30 pm. The hearing was fairly well attended with roughly forty members of the public present.

Several members of the public spoke in strong support of the nomination while two had specific questions. A member of American Whitewater had concerns over river access. It was explained that an LAC, once established, could take on the task of documenting access sites and providing signage and information on the river at such access points. Another question was regarding the impact of nomination on landowner rights. The nominating committee explained Towns' local zoning ordinances and the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act already set the majority of regulations riparian landowners must comply with. Designation of the Warner River to the RMPP would only add setback requirements for landfills, hazardous and solid waste facilities and disposal of sludge and septage.

Public comment will be accepted in writing until August 1st, 2017. If the level of public support determined by DES is sufficient, the DES commissioner will submit a legislative service request to amend RSA 483 to include the Warner River in the River's Management and Protection Program.