

Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee

Washington Lempster Marlow Gilsum Sullivan Surry Keene Swanzey Winchester Hinsdale

2008 Annual Report

This year the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC), along with other NH Local Advisory Committees, was honored with the *President's Volunteer Award* in April, and the *Spirit of NH Volunteer Service Award* in the State and Local Government category in November for our efforts to advise the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) and our communities on actions and issues to protect and manage the Ashuelot River. This year also commemorated the 20th Anniversary of the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Ashuelot was designated as a protected river in 1993. ARLAC members, nominated by local municipal officials and appointed by the commissioner of DES, have been educated in a broad array of issues associated with the river and its watershed. It is the hope of the committee to be a resource that works well between the interests and concerns of the citizens in the watershed and state authorities.

This year we performed site visits and submitted comments on 10 projects occurring in Washington, Keene, Swanzey, Winchester and Hinsdale; two NH Department of Transportation projects; and actions on state land in Keene and Winchester. Letters of support were submitted for a NH Office of Energy and Planning grant to the town of Marlow for development of a Natural Resource Inventory, and in support of the final report of the DES Ashuelot Pond Drawdown Study. Comments were submitted to the Silvio Conte Comprehensive Conservation Plan. ARLAC continued to follow legislation and rulemaking, supporting changes to the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act, and HB 384 safeguarding surface waters by requiring more stringent reporting of failed septic systems on lakes and rivers. We also supported the passage of the comprehensive Alteration of Terrain rules established late this year. We continued participation as a member of the NH River Restoration Task Force and support the removal of the Homestead dam which has been delayed for another year. This year Keene adopted parts of the 2006 Ashuelot River Corridor Management Plan into its Open Space Ordinance.

The Ashuelot River water quality monitoring program in conjunction with the DES Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) continued for its eighth season. Ten sites were sampled from Washington to Hinsdale. Analyses were done for temperature, pH, total phosphorus (TP), dissolved oxygen, turbidity, conductivity, and metals with the City of Keene donating lab services to analyze samples for cadmium, copper, lead and zinc. ARLAC members, working with community volunteers collected samples monthly from May through September. E. coli samples were obtained monthly in July, August and September. Additional sampling in Swanzey was funded by the Swanzey Conservation Commission to assess TP and E.coli in W. Swanzey. Data are available online at <http://academics.keene.edu/pegglest/AshuelotRiver.htm> or <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/ashuelot/index.htm>.

In October ARLAC co-sponsored a cleanup of the River from upstream of Ashuelot River Park to the Thompson Covered Bridge in Swanzey as part of the Source to the Sea cleanup. A total of 204 volunteers removed 3,976 pounds of garbage plus 25 shopping carts from the River. Also this fall NH Protected River signs were purchased and posted in Marlow, Swanzey and Hinsdale.

ARLAC heard presentations on the results of The Nature Conservancy's culvert study, which found most dams in the watershed and 20% of culverts are a severe barrier to the movement of species in the streams; Keene State College students' study of coal tar pollution in Mill Creek; and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests' plans for land conservation within the Ashuelot River watershed.

ARLAC invites interested parties to join us at our monthly meetings in Keene on the third Tuesday. Do contact your local ARLAC representatives or the Southwest Region Planning Commission for more information.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Skuly, Chairman

2008 Membership: Linda Fuerderer -- Marlow; Pablo Fleischmann -- Gilsum; Jim Holley, Jo Beth Mullens -- Keene; Barbara Skuly, Stephen Stepenuck -- Swanzey; John Stetser, Dan Carr- Winchester; Terri Mitchell -- Hinsdale.