

Ms. Tilton

As the Chair of the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee I am greatly concerned that the proposed rule changes conflict directly with the duties of my Committee as established under RSA 483.8-a. The Lower Merrimack is currently subject to increasing development pressures and has long been designated as warranting the special protection measures specified in RSA 483.9-b. Many of the proposed changes would severely compromise my Committee's ability to meet its responsibilities to ensure that such developments and other projects meet the intent of State law and DES policies.

Of particular note is the failure of the proposed rule changes to ensure that the Local Advisory Committees are notified along with the local Conservation Commission when reviews of projects near designated rivers are on the DES docket. This change was recommended by the NH Rivers Council but is unaccountably missing from the current change proposal.

Furthermore, the shifting of the dozen categories of projects from standard or expedited permits to PBNs that are **not** reviewed by the LACs prevents the LACs from doing their jobs. Those categories of projects on designated rivers are frequently environmentally sensitive and should be restored to LAC review. If retained as PBNs, at least 10 days of review time should be provided. The same should apply to EXP projects. The frequency and importance of such projects on the shores of the Lower Merrimack is growing.

Finally, on the positive side, the new provision that allows for a combined Wetland/Shoreland Permit Application will be a considerable help to the LACs, by reducing the need for repetitive reviews of the same project.

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Cordially  
Gene Porter