

2015 YEAR-END REPORT FOR SOUHEGAN RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SoRLAC)

This year the required instream flows for the river have been set. This generally applies to low water conditions. When the flow drops below minimum standards as determined by the studies made during the last 10 years, additional water will be released from available impoundments. This actually happened during a couple of brief periods in 2015 when small amounts of water were released from Water Loom Pond in New Ipswich. Eventually water will have to be stored probably behind flood control dam. These instream flows have now been sent to the state legislature so the information gathered here as a pilot project for the state can be used for other state rivers.

SoRLAC is a committee made up of up to three members from each of the six Souhegan River corridor towns, New Ipswich, Greenville, Wilton, Milford, Amherst, and Merrimack. SoRLAC meets on the third Thursday of each month to look at any projects planned along the river and to advise NH DES on permitting. Most of these projects have little impact to the river and the committee offers only slight suggestions that could improve the river corridor. The most controversial project this season was the request to restore eroding banking along the river just upstream of the Turkey Hill Bridge in Merrimack. One of the planned three erosion sites has already been constructed by placing large trees with root balls 15' out into the river. The other two will be constructed in 2016. SoRLAC approved this project after heated discussions.

The Kinder Morgan pipeline proposals that were originally planned to cross Ponemah Bog and the Souhegan four times near Souhegan High School were strongly opposed by SoRLAC at meetings and in letters. That plan has been changed. It no longer impacts the Souhegan in Amherst. The pipeline is still planning an extremely difficult crossing of the Souhegan once in Greenville and it still would cross the Merrimack where originally planned. We continue to monitor these plans and will eventually have a say in the construction.

SoRLAC also coordinates with the Souhegan Watershed Association (SWA) on canoe trips and cleanups on the Souhegan, Merrimack, and other nearby rivers. These trips and other river information is available at www.souheganriver.org. Also SWA will be continuing doing water quality monitoring on both the entire length of the Souhegan River and on the Merrimack River between Manchester and Tyngsborough. This information is released to the local newspapers and copied on the website where all the past data is listed.

Although the Salmon Restoration Program has halted on the Merrimack River, some local schools are still raising salmon in their classrooms and releasing them into the Souhegan in the spring. SWA coordinates the program.

We are disappointed in the decision of the Milford selectmen to not accept funds to remove the two dams in the center of town. The dams have no practical value, they block the river to migrating fish, and they will need to be maintained. Eventually they will come out and restore the river to its natural state, but not this year.

We continue to encourage the six riverfront towns, New Ipswich, Greenville, Wilton, Milford, Amherst, and Merrimack, to put up protected river identification signs at all river crossings – and to extend identifications signs to brook crossings as well.

We have hope for constructing a Merrimack canoeport at the badly eroded, much used Seaverns Bridge access.

We invite anyone interested to our meetings, to join us as a water monitor, or to join in one of the free canoe trips on the river.

Respectfully submitted,

George May