



FROM: Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: 2021 Annual Town Report

The Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee (PRLAC) is a member organization of appointed local representatives that oversees the Pemigewasset River corridor (one quarter mile on either side of the river) that traverses the municipalities of Ashland, Bridgewater, Bristol, Campton, Franconia, Franklin, Hill, Holderness, New Hampton, Plymouth, Sanbornton, and Thornton. The members of PRLAC act on behalf of the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) to review and comment on state and local permits for activities impacting the corridor, and they communicate with municipalities and citizens regarding corridor management. The DES does not have adequate staff to visit most permit application sites in a timely fashion, and they have asked PRLAC as well as other Local Advisory Committees to perform this task for them. Our site visits collect data, make observations, and usually take photos of the sites of the proposed projects that will impact the Pemi corridor, and then we report our findings to DES, the developer, and the property owner. Although we ourselves don't have the authority to approve or deny an application, our observations influence the action that is taken by DES.

As stated in previous annual reports (and is worthy of repetition), the Pemi is a Class B River, meaning that it has high aesthetic value and is acceptable for swimming and other recreational activities, fish habitat, and for use as a public water supply after treatment. Our mission is to do those things necessary to maintain the Pemi's Class B water quality status. Historically, the Pemi has had a wide variety of surface water problems, and PRLAC has had much experience in identifying potential water quality issues before they become a crisis and make suggestions for prevention and remediation.

During 2021, the pandemic continued to remain a great public safety concern, but that didn't seem to damper the number of projects that were brought to PRLAC's attention. Thankfully, PRLAC's membership remained in good shape, and we thank your town for providing knowledgeable and engaged representatives! Just a reminder that Select Boards of each of the PRLAC towns may appoint up to 3 members to the committee.

PRLAC members investigated a record number of permit requests and responded to these and other investigations that were brought to our attention by DES and other municipalities in our catchment area. Our permit investigations included such reviews as the removal and replacement of underground gas and diesel storage tanks, replacement of a building in Jellystone Campground, repair of a failed retaining wall in Bristol, a very ambitious and significant bank stabilization project in Plymouth, proposed construction of a house on a bluff in Thornton, request by Owls' Nest resort to divert Pemi River water to fill a 10 acre pond for fire control and irrigation, and the proposed use of defoliant on 48 acres of knotweed and other invasives on a large piece of property in Bridgewater.

In addition to our investigations and reporting, we also reviewed exciting projects like the Plymouth Conservation Commission's work with both Plymouth and the Town of Holderness to create a new public outdoor recreation park: Pemi Oxbow Recreation Area. We also met with the Friends of the Pemi; Livermore Falls group to review plans for expansion and preservation of the historic Livermore Falls area. Lastly, we received grant funding from NH DES so that we can focus on making limited updates to our River Management Plan.

Another key role of PRLAC is its participation with the DES Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP), where PRLAC members tested water quality at 9 stations along the Pemigewasset and three tributaries that feed into the Pemi. Last year was the 20th year of regular water testing at these 9 stations, and we recognize what a benefit it is to have been able to rely on our volunteers to perform a 20-year longitudinal study of the Pemi River water quality parameters! Testing takes place from Bristol to Thornton and runs from April into September. VRAP tests are conducted for Dissolved Oxygen, pH, Turbidity, Specific Conductance, temperature, and chloride; all key elements in assessing overall river health. Additionally, after taking the previous year off due to COVID precautions, DES's lab was once again able to test for E coli, total phosphorus, and nitrogen at popular recreation sites on the river. Information on DES's rivers and lakes testing program along with the results of our annual testing are posted on the DES website: www.des.nh.gov/water/rivers-and-lakes/river-and-lake-monitoring.

Under state law, the purpose of the Local Advisory Committee is to advise the communities within the watershed and NH DES on matters pertaining to management of the river, comment on governmental plans within the corridor, develop a corridor management plan which communities may adopt as an adjunct to their master plan, and report to NH DES and communities on the status of compliance to laws and regulations. Our management plan can be found here: <http://lakesrpc.org/PRLAC/files/PemiCorrMgmentPlan2013.final.pdf>. It is used to inform the public and serve as a resource for anyone, both citizen and someone interested in going forward with a project in the Pemi River corridor. During 2022, we intend to update our management plan using funding from NH DES.

PRLAC continues to benefit from the financial support we receive from the majority of the Pemi Corridor towns that we work most closely with. For that, we are very thankful! Your contribution goes directly towards protection of this key corridor resource. All corridor communities receive our monthly meeting agendas and minutes. PRLAC meets at 6:30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of the month from January through November. For most of last year, we met remotely using Zoom, but we have returned to in-person meetings, and will continue to do so if the safety of our members is assured. Details of the monthly meeting are posted through your Town, and all are encouraged to attend, and you can find out more information from reviewing the meeting minutes. The minutes of our meetings are available at our link: www.lakesrpc.org/prlac/prlacmeetings.asp.

PRLAC continues to be a dedicated group of volunteers with a focus on keeping the Pemigewasset River healthy and cared for so that all of us can utilize its beauty and its natural resources.

William Bolton, Chair
PRLAC