



FROM: Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: 2022 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.

During 2022 PRLAC's membership remained in good shape, and we thank your town for providing knowledgeable and engaged representatives! We gained some new members this year, and were excited when we gained members from Woodstock and Lincoln. These towns are just outside the PRLAC Corridor, but still have essential information and input to aid PRLAC in our mission. We are grateful for their participation. Just a reminder that Select Boards of each of the PRLAC towns may appoint up to 3 members to the committee.

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.

One role of PRLAC is to investigate permit applications that were submitted to DES. Our permit investigations included such reviews as the removal and replacement of underground gas and diesel storage tanks in Plymouth and Franklin, the expansion of a campground in Thornton, culvert repairs in many locations, bridge maintenance, and development in Thornton. We also were able to identify a few shoreline violations. One major concern we are still working on is the clear-cut mowing along the river banks by the various utility companies. We are concerned that they are not leaving enough flora to keep the river banks stable, thus causing erosion. We are

continuing to explore what options we have to control that process. Although not specific to a permit application, members did some research to the possibility of PFAS chemicals being manufactured and used in areas along the river corridor.

Many of the permit applications we received had to do with water withdrawals, primarily in Thornton. Right now the Pemigewasset River has 63 registered users and PRLAC has seen a large increase of withdrawal application this year. Our objective is to balance sensible environmental and economic goals while respecting the rights and desires of riparian property owners of the region as a whole. We wish to ensure that there is enough water to support aquatic life, fish consumption, drinking water supply after adequate treatment, swimming, boating, and wildlife.

One way we are looking to protect this goal is to have the Pemigewasset River be a part of the DES Instream Flow Program. The Instream Flow Program ensures that rivers continue to flow in spite of the uses and stresses that people put on them. The Instream Flow Program operates within the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program statute, Section 9-c (RSA 483:9-c) and in accordance with Administrative Rule Env-Wq 1900. Members attended a public hearing in November which will help determine if the Pemigewasset River will be chosen to be the next river to adopt this program. Here is the link for further information on this program: <https://www.des.nh.gov/water/rivers-and-lakes/instream-flow>

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 21st 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, one purpose of the Local Advisory Committee is to 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 PRLAC was awarded a \$15,000 grant from NHDES for the updating of the management plan. This includes not only updating the data presented, but also identifying new concerns and eliminating those issues that are now resolved. This will be an ongoing process throughout 2022 and PRLAC welcomes all towns to submit their comment and concerns! Your participation in the process is most welcome.

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. 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.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Judy Faran".

Judy Faran, Chair
PRLAC