

Upper Merrimack Management Plan • “First Look” Draft

February 21, 2006

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

WATER QUALITY

GOAL 1: The upper Merrimack River and its tributaries maintain or exceed their statutory designated uses so that its citizens and visitors can enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, and its communities can depend on reliable clean water sources.

OBJECTIVE: The UMLAC will monitor and prioritize state and federal legislation and rules that affect watershed management in the upper Merrimack and draft comment letters and provide testimony to support water quality.

OBJECTIVE: By 2008, all upper Merrimack public and local officials will be aware of the UMLAC and the resources that it provides for improving water quality through a meeting with each community at least once per year or by convening training and other events.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage consistency in the water quality protection measures and requirements included in local ordinances within the Upper Merrimack communities, so that they all have strong, enforceable watershed protection and water quality ordinances in place by 2010.

GOAL 2: Those portions of the upper Merrimack River and its tributaries that are not meeting their statutory designated uses are restored to that standard so that its citizens and visitors can enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, and its communities can depend on reliable clean water sources.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, all stream reaches or other waterbodies in the Upper Merrimack watershed that are listed as impaired on the NH Department of Environmental Services 303(d) list are prioritized for restoration and specific corrective measures identified.

OBJECTIVE: By early 2009, create a restoration plan that identifies, prioritizes, and list sources for funding to implement additional planning, monitoring, and restoration studies or measures to protect water quality and/or aquatic habitat conditions.

WATER QUANTITY

GOAL 3: Instream flows in the upper Merrimack support the public uses and the outstanding resources for which the river was designated such as habitat, recreation, wildlife, agriculture, wastewater treatment discharges, and drinking water.

OBJECTIVE: By end of 2008, all instream protected uses and outstanding characteristics and resources, as described in RSA 483 such as wastewater allocation flow, aquatic habitat, water supply, recreation needs, irrigation withdrawal, will be identified and preliminary corrective measures developed.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2009, create a plan that identifies, prioritizes, and identifies sources of funding to study or implement corrective measures to reduce effects of water consumption and improve flows in the upper Merrimack watershed.

STREAM CHANNEL INTEGRITY

GOAL 4: The upper Merrimack River and its tributaries exhibit channels that are stable, self-sustaining, and capable of supporting diverse biological communities or biota.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2009, through the use of existing data and visual observations compiled as part of the stream bank survey, a river restoration master plan will be developed that identifies corrective measures to address identified stream channel integrity problems and integrate these restoration objectives into the Management Plan.

OBJECTIVE: By 2010, the three most significant stream channel sites will be identified and conceptual plans for them developed, based on the principles of natural channel design.

OBJECTIVE: the end of 2010 will secure public and private funding sources secured to restore the priority stream stability sites such that construction/implementation of the restoration activities are accomplished no later than the end of 2011.

OUTSTANDING RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

AGRICULTURE

GOAL 5: Communities of the upper Merrimack River watershed value, support, and foster the working landscapes of agriculture and forestry.

OBJECTIVE: By 2008, all agricultural lands along the Merrimack River will be inventoried.

OBJECTIVE: By 2012, river levels will be managed so that there is adequate support for irrigation.

RECREATION

GOAL 6: The upper Merrimack River watershed supports recreation opportunities that connect people to the river while conserving and maintaining its natural resources.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, all public access locations will be evaluated as to their usage, effectiveness, and appropriateness and whether their current conditions should be improved to promote greater access and reduce potential environmental impacts to the river.

OBJECTIVE: By end of 2008, a long-range recreation plan will be developed that provides an inventory of existing recreational opportunities and outlines goals and actions to address future needs and possibilities for land-based and water related recreation activities, and identifies funding sources.

WILDLIFE

GOAL 7: The upper Merrimack River watershed habitats maintain ecological integrity and diversity that support healthy wildlife communities.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2009, the recommendations from the NH Fish and Game *Wildlife Action Plan* will be analyzed along with local maps, shoreland protection provisions in local ordinances, and other information.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2011, a plan will be developed to implement appropriate *Wildlife Action Plan* recommendations in the upper Merrimack.

GOAL 8: Those areas of the upper Merrimack River watershed that are not supporting healthy wildlife communities are restored.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2011, a wildlife restoration plan will be developed that identifies, prioritizes, and provides recommendations to restore degraded or threatened wildlife habitat areas, and funding sources to support restoration.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL

GOAL 9: Historical and archaeological sites within the upper Merrimack River watershed are identified, recognized, and appreciated by watershed communities for their value to the landscape and local culture and are preserved for future generations.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, in consultation with the NH Division of Historical Resources and the local historical societies in each corridor community, an inventory of at least 50% of the historical and archaeological sites within the upper Merrimack River communities will be compiled using existing sources prepared at the state or local level.

OBJECTIVE: By early-2009, historical and archaeological sites inventory data will be incorporated into a map that will be distributed to communities and the public to promote better stewardship of historic resources in the community.

OBJECTIVE: By 2010, historical and archeological sites that are unique and relevant to the River and vulnerable to potential loss or destruction and are in need of restoration will be documented and the information provided to the communities.

GEOLOGIC AND NATURAL FEATURES

GOAL 10: Communities along the upper Merrimack River and its tributaries recognize and protect the unique geologic and natural features associated with the river including glacial deposits, sand dunes and bluffs, rare plant communities, floodplain forests, oxbow ponds, and beaches.

OBJECTIVE: On an on-going basis, work with the State Geologist's Office, the NH Natural Heritage Bureau, and others to continue efforts to locate, identify, and document important geologic and natural features of the river area.

OBJECTIVE: On an on-going basis, assist with efforts to educate the public and local officials about the presence of the unique geological and natural features in their communities.

FISH AND AQUATIC

GOAL 11: The upper Merrimack River watershed habitats maintain ecological integrity and diversity that support healthy aquatic communities.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, existing fisheries and benthic community data for the various reaches throughout the watershed will be compiled using existing NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Fish and Game Department, and Upper Merrimack Monitoring Program databases.

OBJECTIVE: By 2012, gaps in mainstem and tributary systems data will be filled.

GOAL 12: Those areas of the upper Merrimack River watershed that are not supporting healthy aquatic communities are restored.

OBJECTIVE: By 2012, at least 50% of unnatural barriers to passage for native aquatic species, including fish, will be removed in the upper Merrimack watershed.

RIPARIAN LANDS MANAGEMENT

VEGETATION

GOAL 13: Colonization by invasive plant species in the upper Merrimack watershed is controlled so that biodiversity and healthy natural systems are maintained.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, locations along the river that are impacted by invasive plant species will be identified and activities will be specified as part of a comprehensive plan to address protection of native species and restoration of sites with non-native infestations.

BUFFERS AND SETBACKS

GOAL 14: Continuous and functional buffers along the upper Merrimack and its tributaries are maintained and enhanced.

OBJECTIVE: By the mid-2008, all current setback and buffer requirements imposed at the state or local level in the upper Merrimack municipalities will be inventoried.

OBJECTIVE: By the end of 2008, recommendations will be formed and presented to UMRAC municipalities to improve the effectiveness of their ordinances based on the existing conditions and the available scientific information that has been developed and adopted within the New England region.

OBJECTIVE: By end of 2008, existing outreach materials will be identified and distributed to assist citizens and landowners in recognizing the importance and effectiveness of setbacks and vegetated buffers.

GOAL 15: Continuous and functional buffers are established along those areas of the upper Merrimack and its tributaries where they don't exist. Setbacks along the upper Merrimack and its tributaries are established or maintained to ensure stream bank and habitat integrity.

OBJECTIVE: By mid-2008, areas are identified for improving and enhancing functional buffers in key locations.

OBJECTIVE: From 2007-2011, an incentive-based approach will be developed to allow landowners to maintain their existing uses in buffer areas and encourage a no-net decrease in the buffer area when the expansions of uses are proposed within that area.

OBJECTIVE: By early 2009, funding sources will be identified to assist landowners in implementing or enhancing buffer areas along key stream reaches.

LAND USE AND OPEN SPACE

GOAL 16: Land uses support the upper Merrimack River's designated uses, hydrologic functions, and the Rivers Management and Protection Act.

OBJECTIVE: By late 2008, corridor municipalities will be provided with minimum impact principles that can be implemented as incentives and land use regulations.

OBJECTIVE: By 2009, all upper Merrimack municipalities have recommendations and tools so that they can draft and adopt appropriate local zoning maps and ordinances that support the goals of the Rivers Management and Protection Act.

OBJECTIVE: On an ongoing basis, municipalities and landowners will have information on how they can work with cities, towns, and local land trusts to conserve their land through easements and conservation sales.