

Conservation Matters

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm jess_tabolt@hotmail.com

Submitted by: Friends of the Pemi - Livermore Falls Chapter

The newest project of the Plymouth Rotary is one that aims to transform the river at Livermore Falls into a family-friendly location where all in the community can enjoy its natural beauty and peaceful tranquility. Plymouth Rotary has become the coordinating party for Friends of the Pemi - Livermore Falls Chapter. This Friends group, with over 90 participating partners in government, local and regional organizations, educational institutions and individuals, identifies issues related to our river, defines a future vision for its use, builds community consensus and executes the actions required to achieve that desired vision.

In 1992, the State of New Hampshire Department of Resources & Economic Development (DRED) purchased 41.8 acres using LCIP money to “secure permanent protection of Livermore Falls ... in the towns of Holderness, Campton and Plymouth including over two miles of frontage on both sides of the Pemigewasset River around the gorge.” This site is marked by natural and historic features including the Nation’s only remaining site of a “pumpkinseed” bridge, a Berlin Iron Works Co. “below deck” double lenticular truss Towne-type bridge, built by the three towns in 1885. The remains of a pulp mill and the State’s first fish hatchery (from 1788) are visible and invite historical inquiry. The area by the waterfall contains Camptonite, an igneous rock so named because of the location where it was first discovered.

The gorge and falls are bordered to the east by Livermore Falls State Forest. The Holderness side, with its sand outwash and island, is a very popular recreation area with excellent fishing, swimming, paddling and tubing downriver. The Campton side also has a nice beach and is an excellent location for viewing the Falls. The protected section of the Pemi starts at the top of Livermore Falls with the Pumpkin Seed Bridge and meanders downriver to the Rotary Amphitheater in Riverside Park next to the Court House.

It is a challenge to keep this area clean, safe and enjoyable for public use. The property does not get much attention from the state, so enforcement issues have increasingly fallen to the three towns. In April 2012, the Holderness Police Chief enlisted Executive Councilor Ray Burton's help in coordinating a stakeholder's gathering to discuss solutions to the problem of illegal activities at the Falls. Since then, the efforts have shifted to stewardship and community engagement. The Friends of the Pemi - Livermore Falls Chapter was formed to include all stakeholders interested in preserving the land, water and environment along this river corridor.

To date, the Friends group has overseen the transfer of management from NH Fish and Game to DRED, increased supervision at the site, developed preliminary plans for additional parking on both sides of the river and a footbridge over the railroad tracks on the Plymouth/Campton side, developed plans for improvements such as fencing, brush cutting, picnic tables, grills and trash collection and scheduled a "Visioning" day in late March 2014 to promote public participation in these efforts.

Funding comes from contributions and a Grant from Rotary International for future improvements. You can help by making a financial contribution (made to Plymouth Rotary Foundation, Friends of the Pemi), helping to communicate the importance and goals of the project with others, and by participating in discussions about the desired future state of this tremendous asset.