

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

Title: The Baker River Watershed

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As I write this article, a chorus of peepers is a welcome backdrop to usher in summer, the high season for the great outdoors. Favorite activities such as hiking, camping, swimming and fishing will land on many weekend agendas over the next few months, and all are well within reach right here in the Baker River Watershed.

Situated in the heart of New Hampshire, the watershed is comprised of 136,581 acres through the towns of Warren, Wentworth, Rumney and Plymouth, and presiding over the watershed is the Baker River. Beginning as a steep mountain stream along the slopes of Mt. Moosilauke, the river gradually flattens and meanders a broad flood plain through Rumney and Plymouth, where it joins the Pemigewasset (Pemi) River. The Baker and Pemi rivers are part of the Greater Merrimack Watershed that empties into the Atlantic Ocean at Plum Island, Massachusetts. Although no dams exist on the main stem of the Baker River, there are numerous flood-control impoundments, tributaries, wetlands and ponds in the watershed.

The Baker River Watershed contains important resources to the region. Over ninety percent of the watershed is forested with a large diversity of vegetation species, resulting in logging and timber industries which contribute to the local economy. Similarly, 11,700 acres of farmland hold national, state and local importance. When you consider the influx of outdoor enthusiasts who visit the Baker River Valley, coupled with the agricultural assets and logging industries, our local economy benefits greatly by the features of the watershed land area.

The Baker River Watershed Association (BRWA), one of the few stewards of this natural resource, renews its commitment to preservation with greater zeal each summer when our Water Quality Committee collects water samples along the Baker River. Several strategic locations in each of its four watershed towns are sampled from June-September and analyzed for E. coli, salt content and turbidity. Lab results from the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) are sent to each of the towns and posted on our website for the general public.

Last summer, our Baker River Appreciation Day (river clean-up) was a great success, due in large part to the enthusiasm of community volunteers of all ages. Photos and a full report of the event are available on our website. Other conservation efforts include riverbank erosion treatments, and ongoing attention to Japanese Knotweed, an aggressively invasive vegetation species that, when left unchecked, overcomes indigenous plant life upon which native wildlife depends. The NH Cooperative Extension Services has treatment recommendations for invasive species at <http://extension.unh.edu/>.

Personpower is the backbone to accomplishing all our preservation goals and makes the greatest impact. If you care deeply about the Baker River Valley, you can help preserve its character and natural beauty as a member of our Association (bakerriverwatershed.org). Memberships start at \$10/year. If you seek greater involvement, consider becoming a volunteer BRWA town representative for Wentworth, Rumney or Plymouth. Stay informed of our activities by following us on Facebook ([facebook.com/BakerRiverNH](https://www.facebook.com/BakerRiverNH)). For additional information, contact David Saad at 508-641-7351. We hope to hear from you soon because conservation matters!