

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS - Wantastiquet FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Congress should

1. act to reduce the amount of air-borne mercury delivered to the Connecticut River Valley.

US Fish & Wildlife Service's Conte Refuge should

2. should seek opportunities to conserve good bird and wildlife habitat, especially near the river.

The Federal Highway Administration should

3. award Scenic Byway grant funding to establish the Brattleboro waypoint center.

STATE GOVERNMENT

State legislatures should

4. urge the US Congress to act to reduce the amount of air-borne mercury delivered to the Connecticut River Valley.
5. provide adequate funding for summer maintenance of state-owned river access sites.
6. (NH General Court) reinstate full funding for LCHIP
7. (NH General Court) pass legislation updating the definition of personal water craft to include all such craft under the definition of ski craft, retaining the 300' distance from shore as a requirement for travel over headway speed.

NH Department of Safety should

8. increase enforcement of existing boating laws, to prevent boating conflicts and minimize boat wake-induced riverbank erosion.
9. provide information on boating laws when boat licenses are issued.
10. support legislation to update definition of ski craft to include 3-4 person personal watercraft.
11. ensure supervision by NH Marine Patrol at fishing derbies.

State Fish and Game/Wildlife Departments should

12. provide a location for limited signage at state-owned river access points, aesthetically in keeping with the rural nature of the region, reminding the public of the boat speed law, the problem of bank erosion, nuisance aquatics, and proper boating etiquette.
13. screen parking at state-owned river access points from the river with a vegetated buffer strip
14. provide porta-potties at state-owned river access sites during the summer recreation season.
15. enforce littering laws.
16. encourage more car-top boat access for the use of canoes and other small craft, on the mainstem and on tributaries, because of their low impact on the river.
17. consider potential environmental impacts before moving ahead with improvements to existing state-owned river access sites.
18. (VT Fish and Wildlife) confer with NH Marine Patrol if expansion of Vermont river access is contemplated.
19. (VT Fish & Wildlife Dept.) assist the Town of Westminster with construction of a car-top boat access.
20. (NH Fish and Game Dept.) assist Cheshire County with construction of a boat access at the Cheshire County Farm in Westmoreland, after ample public discussion about its design.
21. (NH Fish and Game Dept.) should provide a site for posting public information at the Prospect Street landing
22. (NH Fish and Game Dept.) build a boat access at the mouth of the Ashuelot River below Vernon Dam.
23. (NH Fish and Game Dept.) work with local volunteers to develop a canoe campsite at Dunshee Island in Walpole.
24. conduct a survey of local anglers to see how many are subsistence fishermen, in order to ensure that fish consumption advisories are well calibrated to local consumption.

State Parks/Recreation agencies should

25. educate NH landowners about the benefits of leaving land open to the public and the liability protections offered by existing laws; educate landowners about 20% recreational adjustment under current use and Class A/B trails.
26. consider purchasing more land to dedicate to public recreation.

- 27. operate and maintain the Ashuelot rail corridor as a multi-use trail.
- 28. support the efforts of local trails organizations and development of their partnership with towns and with state natural resource and transportation agencies to cooperatively plan for trail corridors and resolve conflicts.
- 29. provide more enforcement for ATV violations.

State transportation agencies should

- 30. provide limited signage identifying waterways which is aesthetically in keeping with the rural nature of the region.
- 31. provide a small parking area and river access for fishermen and cartop boats at the new Route 9 bridge in Chesterfield.
- 32. connect the historic Route 9 bridge with bicycle lanes on Routes 9 and 5 to improve cross-river bicycle and walking trail connections
- 33. improve bicycling safety; assist towns in creating bike paths.
- 34. consider surface and drainage improvements to rail trails.

NH DES should

- 35. monitor water quality, to ensure that the river is safe for swimming.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

- 36. screen parking at town-owned river access sites with a riparian vegetated buffer strip and provide a site for educational information that is aesthetically in keeping with the rural nature of the region, reminding the public of the boat speed law, the problem of bank erosion, invasive species, and boater responsibility. Provide porta-potties at river access sites during the summer recreation season.
- 37. encourage more car-top boat access for the use of canoes and other small craft; use low-impact design.
- 38. monitor local boat access points for invasive species.
- 39. Westminster and Westmoreland should consider locations for fishing and car-top boat access.
- 40. Chesterfield should provide a site for posting public information at the River Road landing.
- 41. discourage construction of new public boat ramps.
- 42. discourage construction of new marinas on the river.
- 43. consider adopting local control of docks, especially in Vermont in the absence of state oversight of dock construction.
- 44. wastewater treatment plant managers should notify the public immediately if there is a suspected water quality violation at a wastewater treatment plant during the summer recreation season.
- 45. local fire departments should have water rescue equipment available for river recreation emergencies at all seasons.
- 46. encourage birdwatching and other low impact forms of recreation.
- 47. support the efforts of local trails organizations and the development of their partnership with state natural resource and transportation agencies to cooperatively plan for trail corridors and resolve conflicts.
- 48. explore federal and state funding programs, such as SAFE-TEA, to create trails and other new recreation opportunities.
- 49. create trail guides to town owned properties.
- 50. inform landowners about liability protections and benefits of allowing public recreation, especially through conservation commissions.
- 51. protect the stone arch railroad trestles at Aldrich Brook in Walpole with easements.
- 52. enhance bicycle safety by promoting construction of bike paths.
- 53. encourage protection of scenic views of the river corridor.
- 54. explore the purchase of small parcels of land along the river and its tributaries for public parks.
- 55. identify opportunities, when land is developed, to retain easements for public access for trails, birding, car-top access, or other public recreation.
- 56. control establishment of ATV trails within the town.
- 57. Schools and other groups can devise their own quests using Valley Quest's recently published guidance

Regional Planning Commissions should

- 58. coordinate multi-community recreation and open space plans.
- 59. inventory scenic views along the Connecticut River Byway and from the river, and check for disappearing views.

Connecticut River Scenic Byway Council should

- 60. encourage birdwatching and other nature-based, low impact forms of recreation.
- 61. help educate residents and visitors to the region on respectful use of private land, such as asking landowner permission and avoiding littering.
- 62. encourage an excursion train along the river from Brattleboro to Charlestown.
- 63. encourage inn-to-inn canoe trips for their commercial value to local inn owners.
- 64. encourage protection of scenic views of the river corridor.

PRIVATE SECTOR

TransCanada Hydro Northeast and its successors should:

- 65. install permanent signage at its boat launches, reminding public of boat speed law, the problem of bank erosion, nuisance aquatics, and boater responsibility.
- 66. continue to maintain canoe campsites at Stebbins Island and Wantastiquet/Hinsdale.
- 67. continue to maintain portages around its dams at Bellows Falls and Vernon.

Marina owners should:

- 68. remind their customers of boating laws and boater responsibility, and caution them about transporting invasive species.
- 69. ensure that customers renting jet skis understand where these craft can be legally operated, and caution them not to disturb waterfowl and other wildlife in shallow areas.

Chambers of commerce should

- 70. promote inn-to-inn canoe trips to further low-impact use of the river with an economic return to local businesses.
- 71. promote inn-to-inn bicycle touring in the region.
- 72. encourage an excursion train along the river from Brattleboro to Charlestown.
- 73. encourage resumption of river tours by the “Belle of Brattleboro.”

Land conservation organizations should

- 74. pursue open space protection, providing public recreation access for birding, car-top boats, or trails where possible and appropriate, especially near the river and its tributaries.
- 75. help protect scenic views and habitat for birds and other wildlife, especially along the river.

Recreation groups should

- 76. encourage education of residents and visitors, particularly about the impacts of different forms of recreation and visitor etiquette.
- 77. fishing tournament organizers should make provisions for legal parking so that the trailers and vehicles of tournament participants do not interfere with private property or clog access parking lots.
- 78. fishing tournament organizers must notify the NH Fish and Game Department well before an event, and should also notify NH Marine Patrol. They should also contact the hydro dam operators to inquire whether any water level changes are anticipated on the day of the event, and ask fishermen to check their boats and trailers for invasive species before launching.
- 79. fishing tournament organizers should inform visiting fishermen of boating laws on the Connecticut River, especially with respect to legal speed near bridges, islands, other boats, and fishermen.
- 80. fishermen and other recreationists must carefully clean their gear after visiting the Connecticut River and report sightings of invasive aquatic species to state agencies. Do not release unused bait into the water.
- 81. local outfitters and guides should educate their customers about Didymo and other invasives, and to clean their gear.
- 82. snowmobile clubs, Friends of Pisgah, ATV groups, hunting groups, bicycle clubs can provide monitoring, trail watches, and peer education of hikers, joggers, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, and hunters on the proper use of private land to help prevent unwanted trespassing and littering.
- 83. encourage landowners to keep their land open to the public.
- 84. encourage local stewardship of recreation areas (campsites, trail heads, trails).
- 85. develop more published information on trail systems.
- 86. explore possible connections between trail systems, such as the Wantastiquet Trail and/or the Fort Hill Line trail in New Hampshire with Vermont’s West River trails over the historic Route 11 bridge or the Fort Hill railroad bridge.
- 87. create a walking tour or interpretive trail along the Cheshire Line below Westmoreland Station.
- 88. address trail erosion with increased trail maintenance.

89. provide better signage for trails, especially in Hinsdale.
90. identify potential canoe campsite locations, and work with state historical resources agencies to screen sites for archeological resources.

Citizens should:

91. obey boat speed laws.
92. avoid swimming and anchoring boats below the Bellows Falls and Vernon Dams due to the possibility of sudden releases of water.
93. avoid littering at access sites and along the riverbank; participate in volunteer cleanups.
94. check boats and trailers before and after launching in the Connecticut or its tributaries to avoid transporting milfoil, Zebra mussels, or other unwanted invasives.
95. check to see if a dock permit is needed before installing a dock.
96. fishermen should replace their lead sinkers and jigs with safe tackle.
97. avoid hiking or riding on trails in wet conditions, especially when exposed soils are saturated from snow melt and rain.
98. avoid snowmobiling on the river.
99. volunteer to help with trail maintenance for their chosen form of recreation, whether it's hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, or snowmobiling.
100. Snowmobilers, jet ski riders, and ATV riders should consider replacing their equipment with four-stroke engines.
101. Motor boaters should avoid milfoil-infested areas, to keep propellers from chopping up and dispersing the plants.
102. Water skiers should avoid Retreat Meadows and should obey state laws regarding establishment of water ski courses.
103. Boaters visiting riverside land for picnics should be considerate of the landowner and not leave a trace of their visit, and avoid climbing up steep erodible riverbanks.
104. seed trails on their land with native seed mix
105. Riverfront landowners should protect their property – and their privacy – with vegetated riparian buffers.