

## Oyster River Local Advisory Committee - 2012 Annual Report

Eric Fiegenbaum, Chair

On June 7, 2011, the Oyster River was added as a designated river to the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP). The program, established by RSA 483, protects rivers for their outstanding natural and cultural resources, and is based on a two-tier approach to river management and protection: state designation of significant rivers and protection of instream flow values, and local development and adoption of river corridor management plans. The RMPP calls for the establishment of a local river advisory committee (LAC) made up of members nominated by the governing bodies of the towns through which the designated river flows. The duties of the committee include advising on plans or actions that would alter the resource values or characteristics of the river, developing a local river corridor management plan, and reporting biennially to the state and annually to the towns.

Early 2012 was an organizing period for the Oyster River Local River Advisory Committee (OR LAC). On March 12, 2012 the Committee adopted bylaws, elected officers and established a regular meeting schedule. A letter of introduction was sent to each of the member towns which currently have the following representation: Barrington (2), Durham (4), Lee (1) and Madbury (2). Since the Committee does not have physical office space we saw the establishment of a web site as a priority. The site, at [www.oysterriverlac.org](http://www.oysterriverlac.org), serves as a virtual office. Besides information on the Oyster River, the site contains public notices, membership information, as well as our comments, reports and activities. The Committee can be contacted through a general email address at: [info@oysterriverlac.org](mailto:info@oysterriverlac.org).

The Committee went on to understand our obligations under the NH Right-to-Know laws, and to establish procedures to comply with our duty to comment on NH DES landuse permit applications and any activities that might impact the river's resources. In 2012 we commented positively on Durham's proposal to upgrade water meters which will provide better water usage records, and the reconstruction of a problematic bridge crossing in Barrington that will allow for improved fish passage on the river.

The Committee took a "river tour" conducted by members of Oyster River Watershed Association (ORWA). The Committee also made itself familiar with the 11 years of water quality monitoring data that has been collected through the NH DES Volunteer River Assessment Program by ORWA volunteers. The Durham town engineer spoke to the Committee on the Spruce Hole Well & Artificial Recharge Project and its possible impacts on Chesley Brook. To better understand more regional issues the Committee co-sponsored with ORWA and opened to the public a well attended four part mini-series on nitrogen issues affecting Great Bay.

The Committee is planning for 2013. We are supporting a grant to partner with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to fulfill our duty to develop a corridor management plan. A important part of the multi-year effort will be an outreach to member towns. The Committee looks forward to continuing with its duties and future collaboration with those that wish to protect the values and resources of the Oyster River for all.