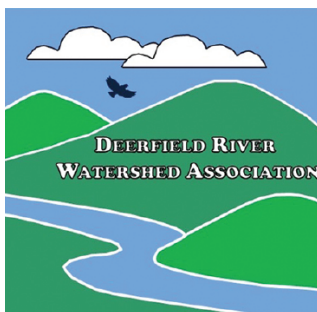




Fall 2020



News from the Deerfield River Watershed Association

Strange Times—And Yet, Some Progress

Where to even begin... It has been a crazy year on the Deerfield River and its tributaries. Hot weather. COVID-19. People headed to the river and river hiking trails in numbers I have never seen before. People parked in places I've never seen them park, at least in such large numbers. Everyone thoroughly enjoying themselves. The Town of Charlemont and Mass. Department of Transportation have joined together to restrict parking. A justified move? Not so sure. They certainly lack restroom facilities and adequate parking to accommodate tourists, picnickers, swimmers, boaters, and anglers up and down the river. That could have been their focus instead. In other news, we had our first major graffiti attack in a popular Wilcox Hollow swimming area along the Deerfield. A real bummer. In more uplifting news, we are working with the Connecticut River Conservancy on a major river restoration project on the North River. The power of grant funding! We could not have managed this major river restoration project with our very small budget.



We truly hope you and yours are safe and healthy. I hope to see you on the river and river trails this Fall. I'll be wearing my mask.

— Jim Perry, President, Deerfield River Watershed Association



Grinding off the paint without damaging the rock.

Graffiti Removal at Wilcox Hollow

It looks as though we will have to add “graffiti removal” to our list of volunteer job duties. One “Artist” left dozens of “graffiti artworks” on what has become one of the best places on the river to swim and relax—on smooth rocks and real sand. I will never understand people who are content to damage public and private property for their own amusement. It took a lot of experimentation and donated equipment, tools, and supplies, but we finally figured out how to remove “most” of the graffiti paint. People really enjoy this quiet area. We hope to keep it natural for you.

— Jim Perry



River Restoration on the North River

The Deerfield River Watershed Association is teaming up with the Connecticut River Conservancy to work on a river restoration project on the East Branch of the North River in Colrain, MA this fall. Both nonprofit organizations are recipients of grant money from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to implement the project on two parcels of private property that are used mostly for hay, but also pasture and corn. Flooding and erosion during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 wiped out the forested buffer along the river on these properties. The river is now shallower and wider, and lacking in woody habitat features in the river. Our grant involves installing wood buttresses along 560 ft. of exposed riverbank and establishing a vegetated buffer along 870 ft. of bank. The buttresses will be comprised of intertwined horizontal and vertical logs that will be driven into the bank and river bottom and lateral logs connecting adjacent buttresses. Rootwads at the end of the logs will be used to anchor adjacent logs. Spaces within the buttresses will be filled with slash and boulders. The wood buttresses are meant to be only semi-permanent, creating habitat as they gradually break down over time. The Connecticut River Conservancy is managing the overall project, and both organizations have contracted locally with Pantermehl Land Clearing (Ashfield) to supply the wood, Scapes Builders (Deerfield) for construction, and Land Stewardship Inc. (Gill) for invasive plant removal and vegetative plantings.

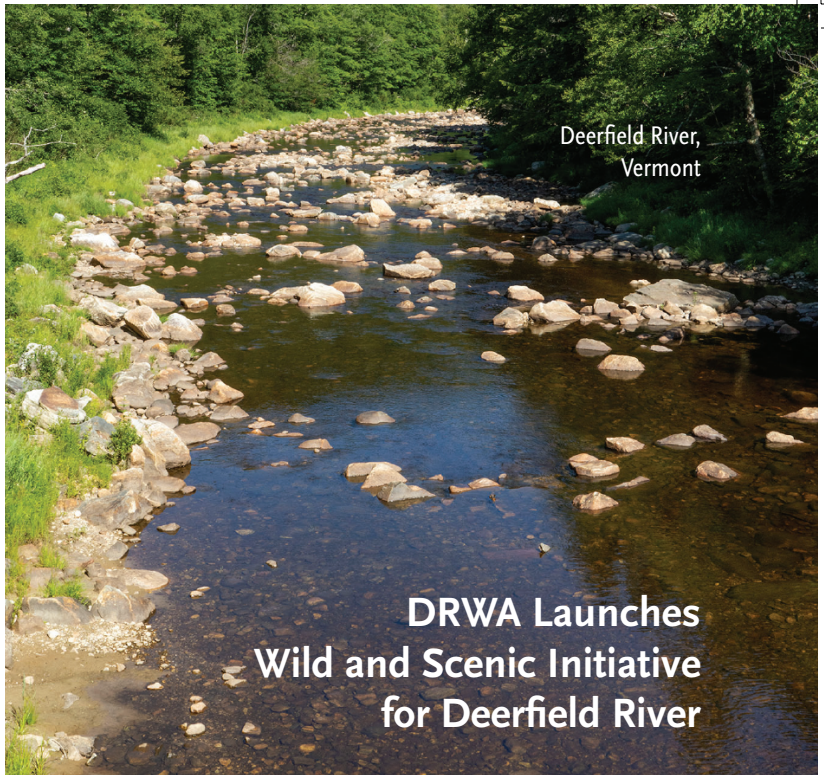
—Charlie Olchowski &
Andrea Donlon



Before restoration



During restoration



Deerfield River,
Vermont

DRWA Launches Wild and Scenic Initiative for Deerfield River

DRWA's Board of Directors has decided to launch a new initiative to evaluate potential designation of segments of the Deerfield River as a National Wild and Scenic River. Wild and Scenic designation would likely bring federal technical and financial resources to help enhance and protect the river. The first step in this process will be to seek federal funds for a feasibility study, to determine that the river is eligible and feasible for designation and that it is locally desirable it become designated.

The Deerfield River is an outstanding resource for many reasons. With rapids from Class II-V, it offers perhaps the best whitewater boating and rafting in Massachusetts. It is also an excellent trout fishery, with some of the best dry-fly fishing for wild trout in the East. The historically significant Mohawk Trail ran along the river and was a principal Native American travel route. Several tributaries, such as Cold River and Bog and Gulf Brooks, are wild free-flowing rivers. Multiple segments of the Deerfield River were identified on the National Rivers Inventory as having "outstandingly remarkable" values, and eligible for National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation.

Several other rivers in Massachusetts have previously received National Wild and Scenic River designation, most notably the nearby Westfield River. These rivers receive significant amounts of federal funding annually to help with river protection and enhancement projects.

Over the coming months, DRWA will be reaching out to and meeting with Selectboards in communities throughout the watershed to seek their endorsements for a Wild and Scenic River study. Already, DRWA has met with the Town of Deerfield Selectboard, and they voted affirmatively to endorse seeking Wild and Scenic designation for the river.

—Chris Curtis