

NHDES & New Hampshire Rivers Management Advisory Committee
29 Hazen Drive | PO Box 95 | Concord, NH 03302-0095

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of the Warner River of New Hampshire for inclusion in the New Hampshire Rivers Management & Protection program. As a whitewater boater of nearly 14 years and river management professional, my support for of the Warner River emphasizes the cultural and recreational resource the Warner provides as a community resource and regional whitewater kayaking destination.

While getting a Masters Degree in Recreation Management & Policy at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, the Warner was a staple for class IV boaters, and a rite of passage for those paddlers stepping-up from the class III+ Winnepesaukee and Contoocook Rivers, into more difficult waters. As a short run, with ample warm-up and forgiving rapids is the ideal “first creek” for paddlers aspiring to challenge themselves on increasingly more difficult waters. There are few other rivers that provide an opportunity to hone class IV skills on such forgiving whitewater in the area. Because of this, and the predictability of difficulty at varying flows, the Warner has become a classic testpiece for those looking to monitor their progression: “How high have you run the Warner?” is a frequent question posed to unfamiliar paddlers looking to suss out their fitness to run harder waters.

In addition to its inherent quality as a step-up river into class IV, the geography and geology make it one of the more reliable and longer-running rivers in the area, and is favorably located between other destination rivers like the Contoocook, North Branch of the Contoocook, North Branch Piscataquog, Blackwater, Merrimack, Otter Brook, Asheulot, and others. It is not uncommon for the Warner to be a part of a multi-river day. The hydrology of the watershed, such that it begins with a marsh, means that flows are often quite predictable, stable, and favorable for long periods of time. This means the Warner is often “in” when other rivers are too high, or for several days after they have dropped out. The geography and reliability of this run make it one of the more frequently run rivers of its difficulty in the region.

These factors together make it an invaluable resource to the whitewater community extending far beyond New Hampshire. I have lived, worked, and been part of whitewater communities in the Northwest, the Northeast and the Southeast, and I have seen few other free-flowing (hydrograph not controlled by dams) rivers of this grade, accessibility, and reliability that fulfill such a needed and valuable niche in the local whitewater culture and progression trajectory for aspiring boaters as the Warner.

To put it another way, if utility of the Warner river for whitewater paddling were eliminated or constrained by a change in access, navigability, adequate flows, or undesirable changes in water quality, I cannot easily think of another river that would easily take its place in local paddling culture. It would be a palpable loss for the community, and deserves intentional and thoughtful management to protect these values – combined with the additional habitat and scenic values it also undoubtedly provides non-paddlers as well.

Sincerely,

Clinton Begley
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