



# York River Study

December 8, 2016

Eliot Board of Selectmen

# York River Watershed

## York River Watershed Area by Town

York =	23.25 square miles
Eliot =	4.75 square miles
Kittery =	3.25 square miles
South Berwick =	1.75 square miles
<b>Total =</b>	<b>33 square miles</b>

# York River and Its Watershed

- What is a watershed?
- York River
  - About 12 miles long
  - Headwaters in South Berwick and Eliot
- York River Watershed
  - 33 square mile area
  - 4 communities
  - About 110 miles of rivers and streams



# Why Care about the York River Watershed

- Shared, connected resource among the communities
- High concentration of resources – significant natural and historic resources
- Economic importance and cultural importance to region
- Water supply for region
- Threats to resources – development, changing landscape, over use
- Stewardship / Protecting resources for future generations





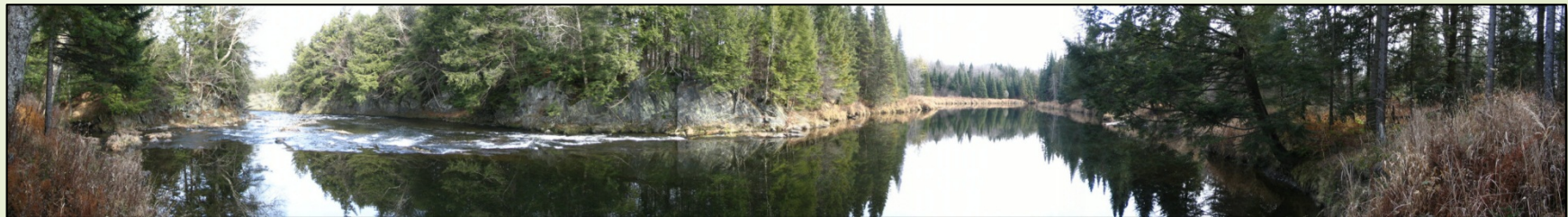
# York River Study

- **Watershed approach** to protecting the York River
- Congressionally-authorized study to explore if the National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation is a good fit for the York River and its communities
- A locally-appointed **Study Committee** oversees the study
- Goal to engage watershed communities in the long-term protection and management of the York River
  - Development of watershed management plan
  - Evaluation of PWSR designation
- [www.YorkRiverMaine.org](http://www.YorkRiverMaine.org)



# Overview of National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program

- Subset of **National Wild and Scenic Rivers System** – 208 rivers, primarily on federal lands
- Twelve **“Partnership Rivers”** (non-federal lands)
  - **No federal land ownership/management** resulting from designation
  - Administration and governance through **local river council**
  - Land use governed by **existing local/state law** and regulations
  - **Locally-developed river plans** – approved prior to designation – guide future management with responsibilities shared among local, state, federal, and NGO partners
  - **Voluntary participation** by partners creates success
  - **Federal funding** leverages additional state, local, and private funding



Missisquoi River (VT)  
Photo: Shana Stewart-Deeds

# Basis to Recommend PWSR Designation

- **Eligibility:** Free-flowing, possessing one or more **outstandingly remarkable values** (ORVs) that based on professional **judgment** are directly **river-related** and **unique, rare or exemplary** at regional or national scale
  - Scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or similar values
- **Suitability:** Three main questions... Should river values be **protected**? Is Wild and Scenic the **best method**? What level of nonfederal **commitment** exists?
- **Partnership Rivers:** Is there a locally-developed and approved **Management Plan**? Is there **community support**? Do **local river protection measures** exist?
- If the York River is found eligible and suitable for designation (with community support), **Congress must enact law** for the river to become a Partnership Wild and Scenic River

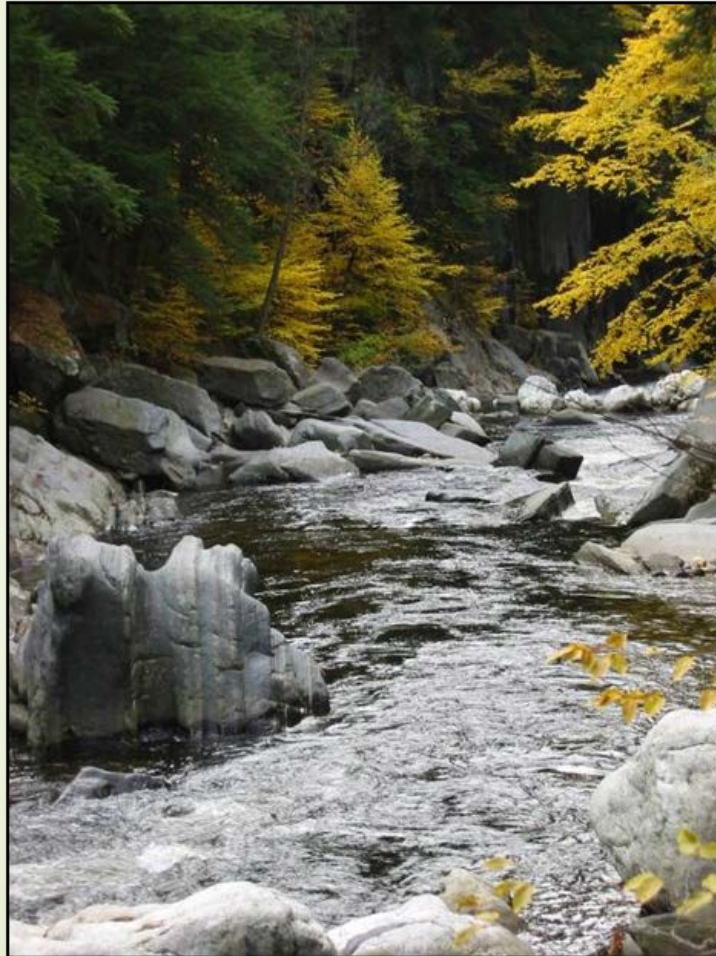


York River (ME)

Photo: Jerry Monkman, Ecophotography



# Benefits of Designation



Westfield River (MA)  
Photo: Carrie Banks

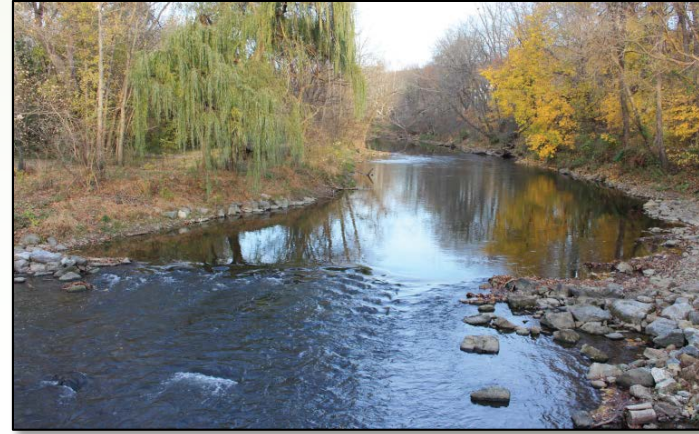
- National **recognition and prestige**
  - **Additional grants**, e.g., fish passage, land protection, youth education, etc.
- NPS **technical and financial assistance** to implement river plan/projects
  - Cooperative agreement (~\$75K/year)
  - Other NPS funding (~\$10K/year)
- NPS **review of federally-assisted** water resources projects to protect locally-identified river values
- Locally-appointed **river council** provides long-term structure to guide future management **across local jurisdictions** within the watershed



# 20 Years of Partnership Rivers



Public access – Lamprey (NH)  
Photo: Dick Lord



Dam removal – Musconetcong (NJ)



Educating youth  
Maurice (NJ)



Solstice celebration – SuAsCo (MA)



Protecting wildlife  
Wekiva (FL)



Land preservation – Great Egg Harbor (NJ)  
Photo: Tim Palmer



# Identifying York River Values

Understanding **Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)** - or what makes this watershed so special - will:

- Help inform the **Wild and Scenic Study Report &**
- Provide foundation for a community-based **Watershed Management Plan**



*\* Goal: Protect the York River's unique character and resources for future generations*

# York River Watershed

## Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)

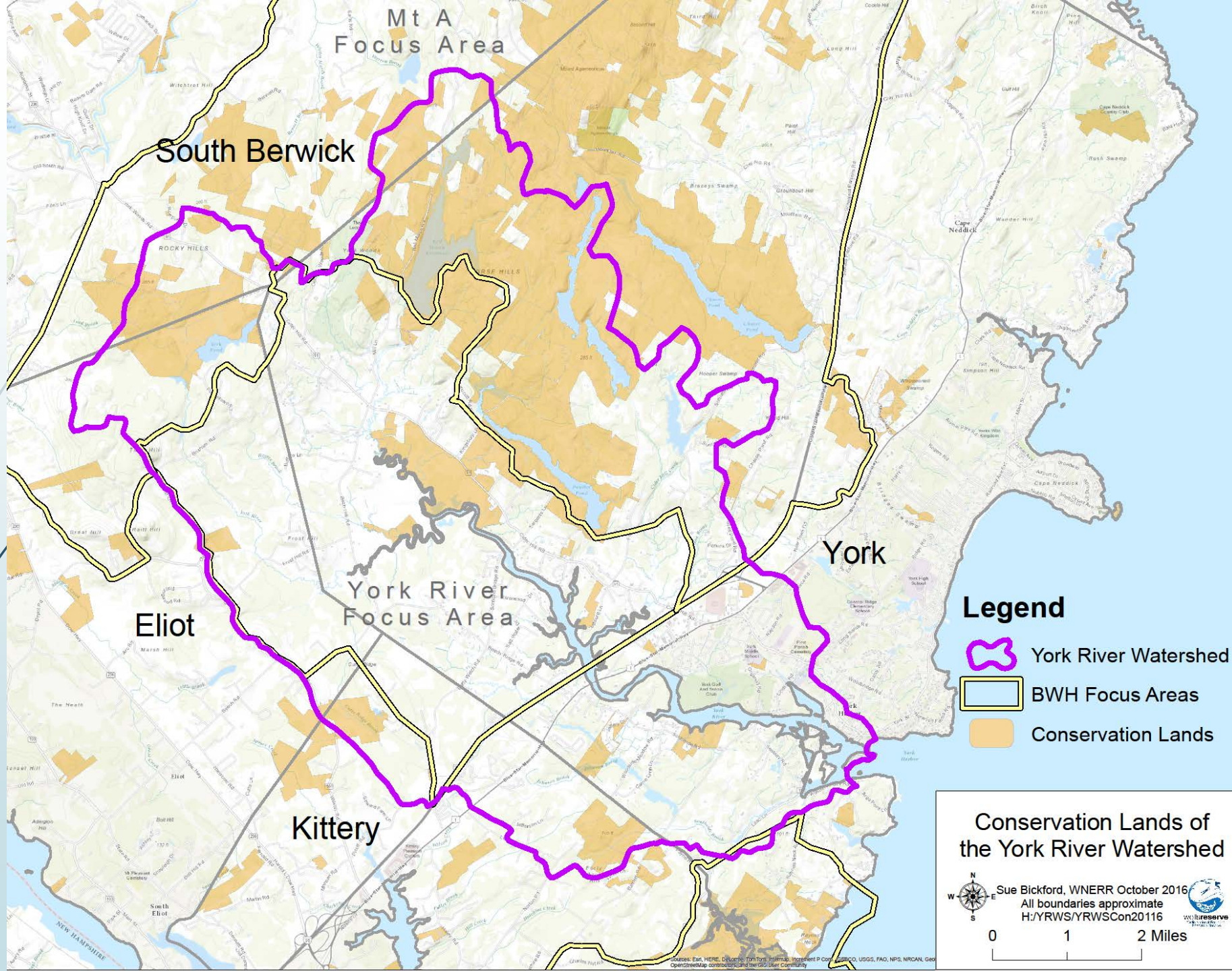


- Economic value
- Source of drinking water
- Natural resources
- Cultural and historic resources
- Water quality
- Recreational value
- Scenic beauty
- Others ?






Context: Protecting Watershed Values in a Changing Climate





## Legend

-  York River Watershed
-  BWH Focus Areas
-  Conservation Lands

## Conservation Lands of the York River Watershed



Sue Bickford, WNERR October 2016

All boundaries approximate

H:YRWS/YRWCon20116



0 1 2 Miles



# Next Steps – Outstandingly Remarkable Values

- Review of existing data / studies
- Conduct limited new research
- Study Report / Recommendation
  - Decide whether to recommend Partnership Wild & Scenic River Designation
- **Community-based York River Watershed Management Plan**
  - Document valuable resources
  - Recommend additional studies needed
  - Recommend strategies for protecting the watershed's unique values
  - Identify opportunities for York, Kittery, Eliot, South Berwick and partner organizations to implement the plan





# How You Can Help

- Provide input tonight
- Send in photos, data, reports
- Participate in meetings

## For More Information

- Study Coordinator Jennifer Hunter  
[jh.yorkriver@gmail.com](mailto:jh.yorkriver@gmail.com)
- [www.YorkRiverMaine.org](http://www.YorkRiverMaine.org)



## Questions / Comments?



