

A Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation will help communities continue to protect the many river-related values and resources in the York River watershed that are important to the region's character, quality of life, and economy.

Historic resources – Watershed lands include hundreds of historic buildings and structures such as remnants of some of the nation's first tidal mill dams, ten National Register sites and over 100 archaeological sites. The rich and well-preserved history, much of it centered around our rivers, is a present-day source of inspiration and pride.

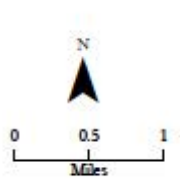
Fish and fish habitat – Rivers in the watershed provide quality habitat and support one of the largest smelt spawning migrations in southern Maine. State agencies have identified smelt as a fish species “of greatest conservation need.”

Salt marshes – The large, intact marshes along tidal rivers are key habitats for many species and help reduce flooding impacts. A recent study found York River marshes in the top tier of northeastern coastal sites surveyed for their resiliency – that is, most likely to support biological diversity and ecological functions under different scenarios of sea level rise.

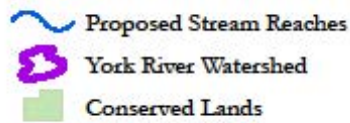
Drinking water – The watershed is the water source for Kittery Water District that serves customers in Kittery and parts of Eliot and York.

Working waterfront – With a mix of publicly and privately-owned docks and infrastructure, the York River is home to an active commercial fishing industry important to the area's economy, character, and history.

Open spaces and forested lands – Communities, land owners, conservation groups, water districts and agencies have preserved or maintained thousands of acres of undeveloped watershed lands that provide valuable wildlife habitat, clean water, recreation opportunities and scenic views.



Proposed Stream Reaches for PWSR Designation: York River Watershed





PWSR Designation

The York River Study Committee supports a **Partnership Wild and Scenic River (PWSR)** designation for the York River and its major tributaries (see map on reverse side).

The designation recommendation for York River and its major tributaries mirrors the Committee’s overall watershed approach to protecting river-related resources. The interconnections of the lands and rivers collectively contribute to the many values that make this watershed special.

PWSR designation is accompanied by annual funding from the National Park Service to a local watershed committee to carry out its Stewardship Plan. Many local river committees throughout the northeast are successfully implementing their plans under this PWSR model, including the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee in southern New Hampshire.

A PWSR designation expressly prohibits the National Park Service from owning land or imposing any land use regulations on watershed lands as a result of designation.



A stewardship plan is developed based on extensive study of the river’s values. The **York River Watershed Stewardship Plan** will characterize the watershed resources, threats and strategies for long-term protection.

The Stewardship Plan will include the watershed’s extensive natural resources, cultural and historic resources, economic resources and other values important to community character.

The Stewardship Plan is advisory. It will identify recommendations and actions intended to maintain watershed values and resources for future generations.

A locally approved Stewardship Plan must be in place before a river can be designated as a PWSR in the national system. Each watershed community will decide on whether to adopt the plan.

Stewardship Plan

Timeline

Dec 2014 – US Congress authorizes the York River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, to evaluate the York River for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

Dec 2015 – Federal funding provided; local study begins

Nov 2017 – York River Study Committee endorses designating York River and its major tributaries in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, as a PWSR, subject to communities’ approval

Early 2018 – York River Study Committee, with continued community input, will develop a York River Watershed Stewardship Plan

Nov & Dec 2018 – Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick and York will vote on adoption of the Stewardship Plan and a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation for York River watershed rivers

2019 – Depending on outcomes of community votes, additional Congressional action and federal legislation would be required for PWSR designation for the York River and its major tributaries