

Town of Charlemont, Massachusetts
The Deerfield River Impact Committee

7/22/2003

Committee members:

Carrie Banks, Zoar Road, Charlemont
Perry Schwarzer, Zoar Road Charlemont
Mary Malmros, Harmony Heights, Charlemont
Mitch Coburn, River Road, Charlemont

Mission Statement:

To Study, and make recommendations to the Town of Charlemont, the impact of summer recreational river use on the town.

The Committee decided that our best course of action was to develop a list of concerns relating to river use. After developing a list we presented it to our invited guests to comment on. The committee interviewed the following people in our research to find answers relating to the impact of the summer recreational river user to the Town of Charlemont.

Frank Mooney	Crabapple Rafting
Bruce Lessels	Zoar Outdoor
Jim Gariepy	Boat Works
Mark Dejackome	Charlemont Police Administrator
Dave Rich	Massachusetts Environmental Police
Ken Hall	Charlemont Fire & Rescue Chief

Our final recommendations are a product of interviews, and the work we did as a committee

Respectfully submitted to the Town of Charlemont,

For the DRIC,
Perry Schwarzer

Recommendations

1. Support passage of MGL- CMR #323 2.12.5 for implementing a fine for alcohol on the river

This is now just a law without a penalty attached to it. Being so, the Environmental Police (the regulating authority on and in the Deerfield River) will not arrest anyone for this violation without a fine or penalty. We suggest that The Select Board, and concern citizens request that our representatives in the general court pass a penalty/fine for this violation. The committee feels that alcohol is a major contributor to littering and unsafe conduct on the river.

2. Install informational signage at access point on the Deerfield River. Work with outfitters, Deerfield River Watershed Association, PG&E, Mass Highway and others.

The Committee feels that many people who visit the Deerfield River lack information on where to access the river, what precautions they should take (e.g. wearing a life vest), and what type of water conditions to expect. Informational signs were recommended at key access points along the river. Key access points may include the following locations in Charlemont: Zoar Gap Picnic Area, Shunpike, Charlemont Boat Ramp, and other pullouts along the river. The suggested content of the signs included information on the power companies flow phone/website, scheduled release dates and times, whitewater hazards, and river etiquette. A map noting access points and rapid ratings could also be included.

3. Develop a map and information brochure of the River showing or describing river access points, river hazards, river safety precautions and phone locations.

Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), a non-profit organization, developed a river safety brochure. The front of the brochure depicts bold broad letters that read "River Safety" and a real-life rescue attempt on the Rappahannock after a man got his foot caught between rocks. The brochure includes a map of the river that notes key access points, trip length, and difficulty. In addition, there is a river safety checklist that reviews what a potential river user should think about before entering the river. A brochure similar to the one developed for the Rappahannock could be designed for the Deerfield River. Information to include would be the Flo-fone number/website, a map of the river-scheduled releases, river hazards and contacts.

4. Work with the Town of Florida and Rowe to implement a consistent plan throughout the three towns.

Consistency and enforcement between town and county lines will be important to give the recreational user the image that the whole section (Fife brook Dam in Florida Ma. to #4 dam at the eastern end of Charlemont) has the same regulations and enforcement.

5. Consider implementing a Town bylaw for PFD use by children when accessing the river.

Recreational River users are bringing young children on the river (mostly in tubes) with out any PFDs. Coast guard approved PFDs have been shown to prevent accidental drowning. Local police can enforce this bylaw if the bylaw states that the PFD must be worn for ACCESS to the Deerfield River. This bylaw and complementary signage, along with enforcement will save lives of children.

6. Establish a car count on Zoar Road weekday/weekend, summer and fall.

This count will establish road usage and river usage. Local and Environmental police to substantiate additional patrols can use the information. This would also eliminate any police patrols that maybe unnecessary. Car counts would set a benchmark, and help in scheduling services the Town may have to provide.

7. Maintain a police presence at the Zoar Picnic Area, Shunpike Rest Area, along Zoar Road and other busy areas. Coordinate with dam release schedule.

Even though officers cannot officially enforce laws pertaining to drinking alcohol on the river and/or requiring safety equipment, such as life vests and helmets, their presence gives a sense of authority. In conjunction with the Deerfield River Committee, the Town of Charlemont should continue to seek grants through the Community Policing Program and other venues to maintain the presence of police officers, especially on high-traffic weekends.

8. Establish a committee to implement and coordinate the town's efforts. Include townspeople, outfitters, fire rescue officials, Power Company, environmental police and other river safety advisors.

There was a strong interest expressed by individuals to continue with the efforts of the Deerfield River Impact Committee. One of the suggestions was to establish a formal committee to work on the recommendations on an on-going basis. The formal committee should include a variety of participants so that expertise and knowledge can be shared.

9. Consult with outfitters, Deerfield River Watershed Association, PG&E and others to determine appropriate information and content and to help find grants to implement projects.

Either in conjunction with a formal on-going committee or independently, it was recommended that the Town consult with various groups working along the Deerfield River. These groups could provide support, materials and assistance on various aspects of the recommended projects. In addition, they could help find funding to implement projects.

10. Consider establishing guidelines, standards, and/or regulations that promote safety and provide reasonable safety information and equipment to customers of businesses that rent, lease or sell inner tubes, canoes, inflatable crafts and other floating vessels for use on water in the town.

Currently, the Whitewater Rafting Regulations establish rules of conduct and operation for commercial whitewater rafting companies along the Deerfield River. The purpose of the regulations is "to promote the protection of public safety and welfare." Similar standards should be adopted for other businesses that rent, lease and/or sell inner tubes canoes, inflatable crafts and/or other floating devices for use on waters within the Town. The minimum standards should include that all these businesses provide information on river hazards that all participants under a certain age would need to wear lifejackets, and other steps must be taken that promote a safe and enjoyable experience along the Deerfield River.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES:

Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

Deadline: May 1st & Oct. 31st for Franklin County

Eligibility: nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status that serve Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin counties

Range: Up to \$10,000

Contact: Nancy Reiche, 413.732.2858 or grants@communityfoundation.org.

Website: <http://www.communityfoundation.org>

Highland Community Initiative:

Deadline: On-going

Eligibility: nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status that serve Highlands region

Range: \$5,000 per month

Contact: Jocelyn Forbush, HCI Program Director
The Trustees of Reservations
5 Strong Avenue, Suite 4, Northampton, MA 01060
Tel: 413/587-0716, Fax: 413/587-3947, e-mail: highlands@ttor.org

Website: <http://hci.thetrustees.org>

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES:

National Safe Boating Council

Deadline: Applications can be received between October 25, 2002 and no later than January 25, 2003

Eligibility: Volunteer boating groups, clubs and associations, Non-profit corporations or organizations, Local organizations (including local chapters of national organizations), Noncommercial organizations, Local governmental entities

Range: up to \$1,000 for each boating safety project

Contact: PO Box 509, Bristow, VA 20136 or Fax 703-361-5294

Website: <http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/rbs.htm>

Boat U.S. Foundation

Deadline: November 1, 2003

Eligibility: small, local, volunteer-based nonprofits.

We will fund volunteer boating groups, clubs, and associations, as well as local nonprofit organizations including chapters of national organizations.

Range: up to \$5000

Contact: David Carter at dcarter@boatus.com or (410) 897-0949.