

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 roughly 100 archaeological sites, nine National Register sites, and hundreds of historic buildings and structures such as remnants of some of the nation's first tidal mill dams. The rich and well-preserved history, much of it centered around our rivers, continues to define the character and culture of the region.

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.

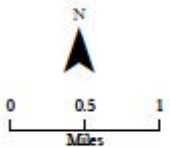
Salt marshes – The large, intact marshes along tidal rivers are key habitats for many species and help reduce flooding impacts. A recent study found York River marshes in the top tier of northeastern coastal sites surveyed for their resiliency – that is, most likely to support biological diversity and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




Drinking water – The watershed contains the water supply sources 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, recreational opportunities and scenic views.

Proposed Stream Reaches for PWSR Designation: York River Watershed



-  Proposed Stream Reaches
-  York River Watershed
-  Conserved Lands



PWSR Designation

The York River Study Committee recommends a **Partnership Wild and Scenic River (PWSR)** designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System for the York River and its major tributaries (see map on back). A PWSR designation provides the structure and key funding for sound, community-driven river stewardship. It would provide federal dollars for activities such as river-related outreach, habitat improvement projects, and water quality surveys. It would create a forum for the four watershed communities to engage citizens, identify priorities, and proactively discuss river management needs.

A PWSR designation for York River would not put lands under federal control, would not change local ordinances or land uses, would not change private property uses or rights, and would not create new federal permits. 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.



The **York River Watershed Stewardship Plan** was developed based on extensive study of the river’s values. It characterizes watershed resources and threats and identifies a range of strategies to protect resources. The plan documents the eligibility and suitability of the York River for a PWSR designation.

The Stewardship Plan is advisory. It includes recommendations to preserve the watershed’s natural resources, cultural and historic resources, working waterfront, recreational resources and other values important to community character. Priorities and recommendations in the Stewardship Plan are consistent with goals and objectives from towns’ comprehensive plans.

Stewardship Plan

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 accept the plan.

Timeline

- December 2014** – US Congress authorizes the York River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- December 2015** – Federal funding provided; local study begins
- November 2017** – York River Study Committee endorses designating York River and its major tributaries into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, as a PWSR, subject to communities’ approvals
- January-July 2018** – York River Study Committee, with continued community input, develops the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan
- November 2018** – Voters will decide whether to accept the Stewardship Plan and endorse a PWSR designation for the York River – Eliot (**Article #10** on the ballot) and York (**Article #2** on the ballot)
- December 2018** – Town councils in Kittery and South Berwick will be asked to vote on a resolution to support a PWSR designation
- 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