

York River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Committee

Background and Next Steps

The York River Stewardship Committee will be responsible for implementing the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan to protect and enhance river values. Its focus will be on identifying and undertaking the highest priority actions from the Stewardship Plan; encouraging collaboration and coordination among the watershed communities and partner groups; and raising awareness of the watershed's importance, threats to resources, and the challenges faced in balancing protection and use.

Background on Partnership Wild and Scenic River Designation

York River and its major tributaries were designated into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in December 2022 after an extensive study process that demonstrated eligibility and suitability for designation. As a Partnership Wild and Scenic River, the York River designation legislation codifies principles of local management and governance by:

- Stating that existing local regulations satisfy the land management requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and York River is not subject to National Park Service laws or regulations
- Naming the locally developed York River Watershed Stewardship Plan as the river management plan
- Identifying the York River Stewardship Committee as the local implementor for coordination

Federal funding and technical assistance are provided by the National Park Service Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program through an annual Cooperative Agreement. The recently passed FY23 federal budget includes funding for York River Wild and Scenic program implementation in 2023.

York River Watershed Stewardship Plan

The Stewardship Plan characterizes important cultural, historical, and ecological resources and water quality. It identifies many recommendations to protect and enhance watershed resources. Recommendations are consistent with comprehensive plan priorities for the communities and actions identified in state-level resource protection plans. Section VIII of the Stewardship Plan outlines a suggested administrative structure for implementation, including formation of the York River Stewardship Committee.

Next steps

The York River Study Committee will continue to focus on activities in early 2023 to assist with the establishment and transition to a Stewardship Committee. Once the Stewardship Committee is in place, the Study Committee will sunset. As described in the Stewardship Plan, the Study Committee will:

- Work with towns to solicit members for appointment to the Stewardship Committee, providing support as requested by the town boards that would make appointments
- Identify partner organizations or individuals to serve as non-voting members of the initial Stewardship Committee
- Work with National Park Service and Wells Reserve to establish a Cooperative Agreement for the first year of programmatic funding starting July 1, 2023 (the Stewardship Committee will authorize expenditures through the Cooperative Agreement)



Town select boards and councils will need to appoint members to the Stewardship Committee. The goal is to have towns' members identified and appointed by May 2023.

For more information:

FMI on the Stewardship Plan, York River Study Committee, study process: visit www.YorkRiverMaine.org

FMI on next steps: contact York River Study Committee Chair Judy Spiller (judysspiller43@gmail.com; 603-969-5910) or Vice Chair Paul Dest (pdest@wellsnerr.org; 207-646-1555, ext. 124)