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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Local residents provide input on the Pemi River Corridor through survey**

The Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee (PRLAC) is pleased to announce the results of their 2010 River Corridor Survey. The goal of the survey was to gather local input about the Pemi River corridor, how the river gets used, and a variety of issues that may impact the corridor in the future. In 2001 PRLAC developed the Pemi River Corridor Management Plan. Since then there have been some changes along the river corridor. The local input from this survey will be incorporated into the update of the Pemigewasset River Management Plan slated to begin in the next few months.

The Pemigewasset River has its headwaters in Franconia and flows through the towns of Lincoln, Woodstock, Thornton, Campton, Plymouth, Holderness, Ashland, Bridgewater, New Hampton, Bristol, Hill, and Sanbornton before joining with the Winnepesaukee River in the city of Franklin to form the Merrimack River.

PRLAC developed this survey by adapting its 1998 questionnaire with input from the public, NH Department of Environmental Services (NH DES), the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC), and North Country Council (NCC); the survey was available for the public to complete electronically and in paper format for five weeks in October and November.

One hundred seventy-one people responded to the survey, more than 80% of whom were residents of corridor communities. One-third of the respondents said they use the river at least 12 times per year. Forty-two of the people filling out the survey own frontage along either the Pemi or one of its tributaries.

Of the eight objectives presented to respondents, the three that were rated most important were: protecting water quality, protecting aquifers (drinking water), and protecting scenic beauty. Opinions were mixed regarding the need to increase public access.

A majority of the survey respondents expressed concern about each of the ten potential threats to the river ecosystem that were listed. Those potential threats that were of the greatest

concern (when the two highest ratings were combined) included failing septic systems, the use of pesticides and herbicides near the water, erosion from development activities, and increased polluted runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots, and roofs.

When presented with a list of eighteen different river and shoreland uses, most respondents felt that the current levels of use for most activities were appropriate. Respondents would, however, support more walking, bird watching, canoeing, and kayaking. They would prefer to have less high density residential development, motor boating, and commercial or industrial withdrawals of water.

Of the 42 respondents who own land along the river or a tributary, half report that they maintain vegetated buffers along the shorefront (a requirement of the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act), 40% have their land in Current Use, a few people have conservation easements or restrictions on their land, and a majority of these riparian landowners have not considered donation as a protection measure for their property.

When asked whether they might support several regulatory measures intended to enhance the protection of water quality in the Pemigewasset River, a majority of the survey respondents expressed full support for prohibiting the use of fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides within 50' of any surface water, ensuring the protection of natural resource areas identified as important for watershed health, more stringent regulations of development on steep slopes, and requiring a vegetated buffer on larger tributaries to the Pemi. There was much more of a mixed response to the concept of requiring inspection and reporting of septic systems every three to five years.

The Lakes Region Planning Commission and North Country Council are providing support to PRLAC in this effort with partial funding by NH DES through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The full results of the survey are available at <http://www.lakesrpc.org/> and <http://www.nccouncil.org/>. If you have any questions, contact David Jeffers (LRPC) at 279-8171 or Tara Bamford (NCC) 444-6303.