

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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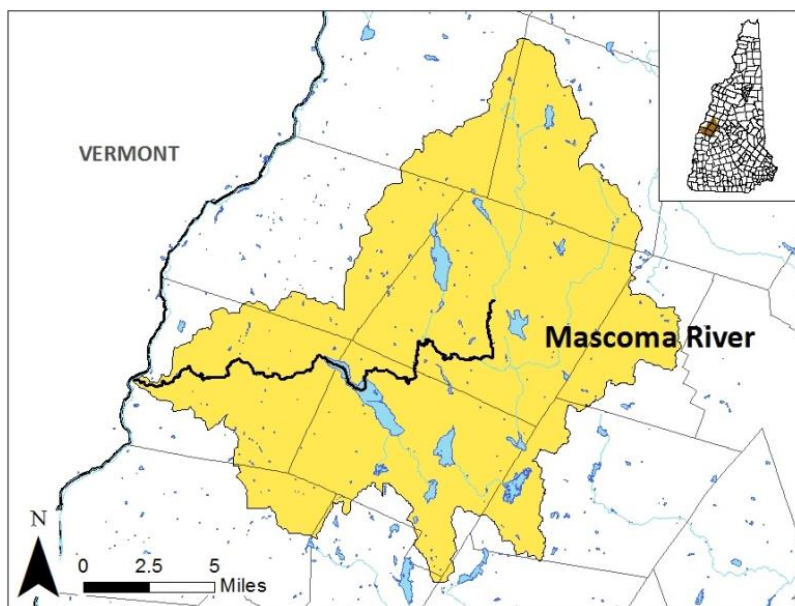
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The Mascoma River

The Mascoma River is part of the Connecticut River drainage basin. Its headwater is Cummins Pond in Dorchester, and it travels through Canaan, Enfield and Lebanon before joining the Connecticut River in West Lebanon.

The portion of the Mascoma River designated under the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program in May 2011 encompasses the last 25.3 miles of the river and drains approximately 195 square miles. The designated segment of the Mascoma River begins at the confluence with the Canaan Street Lake outlet in Canaan and extends downstream through Enfield, including Mascoma Lake, to the confluence of the Mascoma River with the Connecticut River in West Lebanon.



The river is regulated by seven impoundments but is largely free-flowing. Water quality in the river is generally very good. New Hampshire's 2014 Section 305(b)/303(d) Surface Water Quality Report lists several sites along the river as impaired for supporting aquatic life due to pH, dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, aluminum and non-native aquatic plants, and some segments of the Mascoma River are impaired for swimming due to *E. coli* bacteria.

Geology

The bedrock of the Mascoma River consists mostly of Paleozoic sediments, although Devonian and Carboniferous igneous rocks are also present. As the river was carved out by glaciers during the most recent ice age, its surficial geology is mostly glacial till, making the banks excellent for farming or gravel mining. The Glacial Lake Hitchcock clays have been used commercially for making bricks. There are a number of stratified-drift aquifers which border the river and may potentially be a future water source for the town of Lebanon.

History

The Mascoma River was originally used as a trade route by Native Americans, and artifacts dating back to 9,000 B.C. have been found on its banks. European settlement of the river began in Lebanon during the 18th century. The river served as a highway for goods and a power source for grist and saw mills, fueling the towns that were founded on its banks. Several of the historic riverfront structures remain, with one listing on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and four historic districts within the towns of Lebanon, Enfield and

Canaan. Additionally, the Mascoma River was used for transportation and as a water source for the Enfield Shaker Village. The Enfield Shaker Historic District is of national significance, and is part of the Shaker Historic Trail, which connects the 15 Shaker communities on the National Register of Historic Places on the East Coast of the United States.

Wildlife, Habitat and Vegetation

Within the Mascoma River corridor, the 2015 New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's [Wildlife Action Plan](#) notes a number of areas of wildlife habitat that rank as top-tier on a statewide level, as well as roughly a dozen areas of regionally important wildlife habitat. It is home to several rare, endangered or threatened wildlife species, most notably the common loon, which is known to nest on Mascoma Lake. A total of 62 different plant species have been identified, including six that are threatened or endangered. The river is also home to a number of wildlife corridors that connect forests adjoining the river, allowing for safe passage of wild animals from one forest community to another. However, Mascoma Lake has recently been invaded by invasive plant species, most notably Eurasian milfoil.

Recreation and Boating

Mascoma Lake hosts numerous beaches where it is safe to swim. Elsewhere, the river is bordered by a number of parks and natural areas that offer picnicking and walking trails. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation has designated all major roads adjoining Mascoma Lake and the Mascoma River as [bicycle routes](#), with the exception of Glen Road in Lebanon and Shaker Boulevard on the east side of Mascoma Lake. A portion of the Northern Rail Trail, the longest bicycle path in the state, runs along the eastern and northern shores of Mascoma Lake.



Low water level and biological sensitivity of the Mascoma River makes portions of it unsuitable for motorized boats. Such boats are prohibited on most of the river's free-flowing length, but are permitted in the impounded areas, most notably Mascoma Lake. Mascoma Lake is also used by the Mascoma Sailing Club and the Dartmouth College Sailing Team, thanks to abundant winds. The river is very amenable to canoeing and kayaking, and the free-flowing section beneath the Mascoma Lake Dam is home to a yearly kayak race, the Mascoma Slalom. The race was founded in 1963 and is the oldest consecutively run slalom race in the country. Dartmouth College's Ledyard Canoe Club runs the race starting at the Packard Hill Covered Bridge in Lebanon. Serious kayakers continue downstream to Excelsior Rapids, the hardest rapid on the run. The river is home to a number of Class II and Class III whitewater rapids and is included in the Appalachian Mountain Club's *Classic Northeastern Whitewater Guide*.

Fishing

The Mascoma River supports a large fishery, including smelt, bass, walleye, and other warm water fish, which are abundant throughout the river. Other species are maintained only through stocking due to the presence of dams that inhibit spawning. Mascoma Lake and the upper Mascoma River are stocked with eastern brook trout, rainbow trout and brown trout. Mascoma Lake is also occasionally stocked with landlocked salmon.

For More Information

For further information about the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program, visit the [NHDES website](#) and search for RMPP, or contact the Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive; PO Box 95; Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2959; riversprogram@des.nh.gov.