

ROAD BUSINESS

On the Road in New Hampshire

Stream-Crossing on the Ashuelot River



The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in New Hampshire is studying culverts, dams, bridges and other road-stream crossings in the Ashuelot River watershed in southwestern NH. Their goal is to learn how road-stream crossings influence wildlife movements along and in the river.

Wildlife need access to the watershed to reproduce, feed, and survive. Some culverts allow free flow of water, fish, mussels, salamanders and other species, while other culverts become obstructions. A brook trout, for instance, can't always navigate a 12-inch drop at the outlet of culvert.

There are more than 1,000 road-stream crossings throughout the Ashuelot watershed. With help from the Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory, the Conservancy has closely examined most of them. TNC hopes to provide information about as many of these crossings as possible including those that fragment only small streams. They plan to make their study available to municipalities who wish to schedule

their bridge and road maintenance to positively affect wildlife.

“When complete, the study will enable TNC, the state, and local communities to understand where the biggest impediments to fish passage and river continuity in the Ashuelot are and to prioritize structures for improvement and river restoration,” said Mark Zankel, director of conservation programs for TNC. “Planners and decision-makers crave this kind of detailed, site-specific information, presented in a watershed context, so they can better target limited environmental enhancement funds to have the biggest beneficial impact on the river and its biodiversity.”

The Nature Conservancy will provide municipalities in the Ashuelot watershed with a copy of the report. For more information, please contact Eric Aldrich or Doug Bechtel at TNC: 224-5853

by Chris Bourque, Project Assistant

References:

- “A Culvert Operation: TNC Preparing to Study the Ashuelot River Watershed’s 1,400 Road-Stream Crossings” The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire. Granite State Glances. July 2005.
- “Why did the fish cross the road?” Special Places Conference. Doug Bechtel. Director of Conservative Science. The Nature Conservancy. 4/14/07
- Interview. Doug Bechtel. Director of Conservative Science. The Nature Conservancy. 4/11/07 and 5/9/07



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