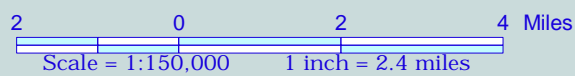


# Atlas of the Ashuelot River and the Ashuelot River Watershed

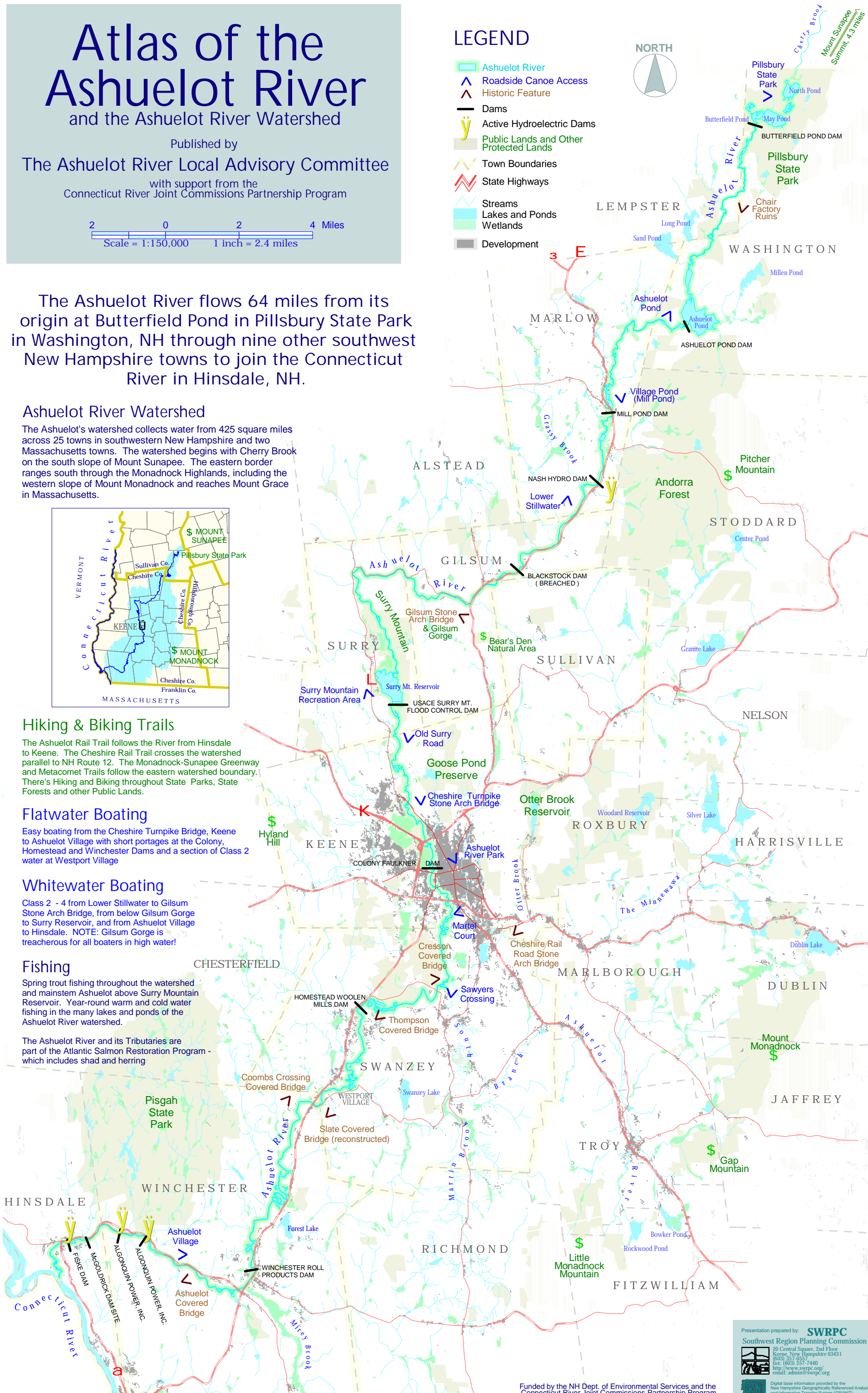
Published by  
**The Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee**  
 with support from the  
 Connecticut River Joint Commissions Partnership Program



## LEGEND

- Ashuelot River
- Roadside Canoe Access
- Historic Feature
- Dams
- Active Hydroelectric Dams
- Public Lands and Other Protected Lands
- Town Boundaries
- State Highways
- Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Wetlands
- Development

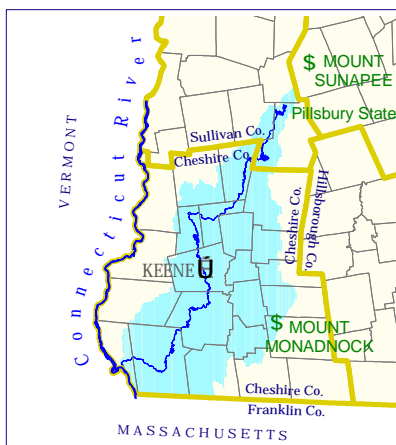
NORTH



The Ashuelot River flows 64 miles from its origin at Butterfield Pond in Pillsbury State Park in Washington, NH through nine other southwest New Hampshire towns to join the Connecticut River in Hinsdale, NH.

### Ashuelot River Watershed

The Ashuelot's watershed collects water from 425 square miles across 25 towns in southwestern New Hampshire and two Massachusetts towns. The watershed begins with Cherry Brook on the south slope of Mount Sunapee. The eastern border ranges south through the Monadnock Highlands, including the western slope of Mount Monadnock and reaches Mount Grace in Massachusetts.



### Hiking & Biking Trails

The Ashuelot Rail Trail follows the River from Hinsdale to Keene. The Cheshire Rail Trail crosses the watershed parallel to NH Route 12. The Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway and Metacomet Trails follow the eastern watershed boundary. There's Hiking and Biking throughout State Parks, State Forests and other Public Lands.

### Flatwater Boating

Easy boating from the Cheshire Turnpike Bridge, Keene to Ashuelot Village with short portages at the Colony, Homestead and Winchester Dams and a section of Class 2 water at Westport Village

### Whitewater Boating

Class 2 - 4 from Lower Stillwater to Gilsom Stone Arch Bridge, from below Gilsom Gorge to Surry Reservoir, and from Ashuelot Village to Hinsdale. NOTE: Gilsom Gorge is treacherous for all boaters in high water!

### Fishing

Spring trout fishing throughout the watershed and mainstem Ashuelot above Surry Mountain Reservoir. Year-round warm and cold water fishing in the many lakes and ponds of the Ashuelot River watershed.

The Ashuelot River and its Tributaries are part of the Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program - which includes shad and herring

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PUBLISHED BY THE ASHUELOT RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# ATLAS OF THE ASHUELOT RIVER

WITH FUNDING FROM THE CONNECTICUT RIVER JOINT COMMISSIONS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM  
AND THE SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

**THERE IS ONLY ONE ASHUELOT RIVER.** Ten towns in southwestern New Hampshire share it. The power of the Ashuelot's moving water is the reason five town centers are where they are. It provided shad and salmon to hunter-gatherer societies prior to European colonization; offers nationally renowned white water boating; supports essential waste water treatment; it is a 64-mile ribbon of water flowing downhill through boulders and swamps, between fern-covered banks, under hemlock thickets, and through pastures and backyards like countless other rivers around the world - but like no other river in the world.

## HISTORY

To travel the River is to travel through time. The Ashuelot River provided power for wood and textile manufacturing for 200 years. Before that the River corridor was home to Native Americans for millennia. Villages, factories, farmsteads, dams, stone walls, bridges, and archeological sites (dating back 9,000 years) are each a link in the Ashuelot Corridor's long history with people: Native American, European, and modern American. The natural forces of geology and ecology are little changed, but, the qualities of the landscape are irrevocably shaped by human activity, and in such ways before us a living story. Settlers colonized rounded hilltops in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century farm communities. Those farm centers stopped growing, or were abandoned, and new villages sprung up on rivers and brooks where homes and businesses co-located with new hydro-powered industry. Clearing forests for timber and agriculture, damming the flowing River for power, and industrial-era pollution profoundly affected the River. Local libraries house "town histories" for most southwestern New Hampshire towns – fascinating chronicles of the comings-and-goings of the individuals, families, and communities that continue today.



## PLANT & ANIMAL HABITAT

The Ashuelot River and its riparian land are very special habitats. One of the high values of any river corridor is the unique community of plants and animals that thrives there. Several major habitat types are easily recognized by the casual passer-by: **the Stream Channel itself, River Bank, Floodplain Forest, Wetlands, Upland Forest, and Farmland.** The stream hosts several habitat types as well: steep rocky channels, wide flat gravel-bottomed reaches, and deep slow moving "flat water" areas. These habitat types combine in a seamless mosaic that supports an essential diversity of plants and animals from moose to hummingbirds to trout to lady slippers. Some plants and animals live only in the stream or on its banks. Many others rely on the stream and its banks as part of a larger habitat – in some cases using the river for part of their life cycle, or as one more place to find food or shelter.

**Warning!** Invasive plant and animal species, species not native to our area, pose a serious threat to the River's ecology. Purple Loosestrife is the most conspicuous invasive plant, and there are many others.

## WATER RESOURCES

The Ashuelot River is the central feature of a watershed that covers more than 425 square miles in southwestern New Hampshire. Water moves endlessly through the air we breathe, over the land we live on and through the rock and soil beneath us. The natural environment of which each person, home and business is part, depends on clean water. Growing demand for clean water by the very development that disrupts the natural movement of water raises concerns about ensuring enough clean water for all uses.



Photo courtesy of US Army Corps of Engineers

**Ground Water:** Stratified drift aquifers (sand and gravel buried by glaciers) are filled with water. This is a particularly rich resource in the towns of Keene, Swanzey, and Winchester. Almost ALL watershed residents rely on groundwater – it doesn't come from somewhere else – it's the same water that falls on our forests, roads and lawns. **Surface Water:** About 160 billion gallons of water drain from the watershed each year by way of the Ashuelot to ultimately join the Connecticut River in Hinsdale.

**WARNING ! NON-POINT SOURCE (NPS) POLLUTION - SOIL EROSION, RUN-OFF FROM PAVEMENT, FERTILIZER, GASOLINE & OIL, HEAVY METALS, PESTICIDES , SEWAGE** - is a serious threat in the Ashuelot River watershed and may also be one of the most preventable threats to the Ashuelot River. Modest changes in our daily routines at home and work can prevent most NPS pollution.

## RECREATION

Residents and visitors alike treasure the Ashuelot River and forested riverbanks for year-round outdoor recreation. Every popular outdoor sport has a place in the Corridor: hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, snow-mobiling, canoeing and kayaking, or just sight-seeing from the car. There are opportunities for all challenge levels from a family roadside picnic to all-day mountain biking or world class white-water boating.

**Remember:** Most public access to the River enjoyed today is allowed by the graciousness of private land owners. Continued access depends on responsible and respectful behavior by those playing in and around the River – it's as easy as **Carry In / Carry Out.**

The Ashuelot LAC Invites You to be a Steward of the Ashuelot River.

AWARENESS

APPRECIATION

RESPONSIBILITY

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NH DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES RIVERS COORDINATOR ☐ 271-3503  
YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION COMMISSION

WASHINGTON LEMPSTER MARLOW GILSUM SULLIVAN SURRY KEENE SWANZEY WINCHESTER HINSDALE