

A Manifesto to the Communities and Citizens Living Along the Watershed of the Royal River from the Earth Stewardship Team of the Yarmouth First Parish Congregational Church

In days gone by a free flowing Royal River was natural and life forms thrived. The ecological health of the entire up- stream watershed benefitted as well as Casco Bay, the Gulf of Maine and the Atlantic Ocean.

That was before the Royal River was industrialized, dedicated to purposes other than the river's life.

Life forms don't thrive on the Royal River today even though the industries have left. Their skeletons remain and block fish passage, trap sediment flow and inhibit life forms such as birds, insects and plant life.

Is the answer the removal of Yarmouth's two dams? That is the best answer for the life of the whole watershed, from New Gloucester through Casco Bay and beyond. But it is a difficult answer for many who work and live along what the river has become with dams.

There are options short of dam removal, expensive options that help, but don't allow for the river to restore itself fully. All stakeholders who care about the river deserve to learn more and to be heard in a community process of decision making. If steps taken to improve the health of the river negatively impact some, assistance in coping needs be taken by the whole community.

The Town of Yarmouth holds the key to aiding the river revive itself. It owns the dams. But the river isn't Yarmouth's any more than the sky over us is one Town's. Yarmouth's stewardship of the portion of the Royal that runs through it is on behalf of all people who live along its entirety and for all life forms that are in it, along its shores and in the waters into which it flows.

In the name of Life it is time for Yarmouth and all communities along the river to identify as stewards of the river. We charge you to learn of the present health of the river, to learn what is needed to restore the river to health and to take action to accomplish it. Let us come together with the goals of a healthy river and a civil community guiding us. A healthy river nurtures life in and around it. A civil community works together for the greater good of itself and the web of civic and natural life in which it exists.

Addendum to the Royal River Manifesto

Over the past two years an alliance of groups and individuals, the Royal River Alliance, has been busy. Dedicated to aid the river achieve a fuller life it has encouraged studies of impact and costs of steps that will improve the health of the Royal.

The Alliance will be sponsoring a series of educational and visioning events this Spring to share what it has learned. All interested persons, particularly citizens of the Royal River Watershed, are welcomed.

1. Monday March 26, 3:00 p.m. at the Yarmouth Log Cabin, Main St.
“State of the Royal River Water Quality” – a panel discussion with experts from UMaine, Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection, Friends of Casco Bay and Casco Bay Estuary Partnership
2. Wednesday, April 25, 7:00 p.m. Chapel of the Yarmouth First Parish Church, 116 Maine St.
Panel discussion with experts on the topic “Present State and Future of the Royal River Ecosystem”
3. Saturday, May 12, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Royal River Park, Yarmouth
“World Fish Migration Day – A Celebration of the Royal River”
Fun for all ages – music, children helping stock trout, canoeing, educational walks and talks, booths from environmental support organizations with hands on displays and more