

## **Management Issue #1** - Riparian Corridor Protection

### **Background**

Riparian corridor lands, those lands adjacent to rivers and streams, are the first line of defense for a river system. Protection of these areas is the most important action that can take place to ensure the long-term quality of river and watershed resources. The enclosed brochure, "The Importance of Streamside Buffers", along with the document "Riparian Buffer Zones: Functions and Recommended Widths" provides important background on why riparian areas are important and the levels of riparian corridor protection needed to protect important river and stream values.

Extensive research was done looking at other riparian corridor protection efforts including:

- The Massachusetts River Protection Act, established in 1996, which requires a 200 foot resource protection area along all perennial streams in the state (except for 14 highly urbanized communities where the area is reduced to 25 feet)
- The Farmington River Protection Zoning Overlay District, adopted in 1992, establishes a 100 foot setback area along the Wild & Scenic Farmington River in four communities in Connecticut
- The new CT River Gateway Standards which establish a 50 foot no activity zone and a 100 foot no structure area along waterbodies in the Gateway Zone. The Town of Lyme in June 2005 adopted these standards for their Gateway area that includes Hamburg Cove.

See "Model River Protection Zoning Overlay Area – Summary of Components" which is based on a compilation of these and other efforts.

An analysis of the parcels in that would intersect the proposed overlay area show:

- In East Haddam only 3.7% of all the parcels in town would intersect the proposed overlay area, with 49% of the actual proposed overlay area already classified as wetlands and 100% of the area already considered within the Inland Wetlands Commission upland review area.
- In Lyme only 9.8% of all the parcels in town would intersect the proposed overlay area, with 60% of the overlay area already classified as wetlands and 100% of the area already considered within the Inland Wetlands Commission upland review area.
- In Salem only 13.4% of all parcels in town would intersect the proposed overlay area, with 50% of the overlay area already classified as wetlands

and 89% of the area already considered within the Inland Wetland Commissions Upland Review Area.

A summary analysis for each town and the watershed follows the *Model River Protection Overlay Area – Summary of Components*.

### **Recommendation**

Each community adopts a River Protection Overlay Zone for all perennial streams and rivers in the Eightmile River Watershed that provides a 50 foot setback on small headwater streams, and a 100 foot setback on larger streams. The proposed Overlay zone is flexible, respecting pre-existing uses and providing for uses within the overlay area consistent with protection of riparian corridor function.

### **Action**

1. Adopt the River Protection Zoning Overlay Area.