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Issues Confronting The River

Water Quality Threats

The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission issued a report in early 1998 on water quality threats that are beyond the abilities of local and state governments to address and resolve on their own. "The Health of the Watershed" identifies specific locations of problems such as toxins in the River (e.g., PCBs), combined sewer overflows (CSOs), bio-accumulation of contaminants, and non-point source pollution. CSOs cause temporary Class C conditions in urban areas after storm events. All four of the watershed states have public health advisories for the consumption of fish.

Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

A comprehensive inventory and assessment of critical fish and wildlife habitats in the watershed was conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for the Connecticut River National Refuge. Habitat loss and fragmentation were found to be significant threats to the rich bio-diversity of the Connecticut River Valley. The Service identified 142,000 acres as "special focus areas" that warrant protection, either because of the presence of protected species or to maintain bio-diversity.

Air Pollution

Acid precipitation and atmospheric deposition of mercury and other contaminants are a problem throughout the watershed. While some sources are local, most sources of air pollution affecting the watershed are outside the region.

Hydroelectric Dams

The Connecticut is one of the most developed rivers in the Northeast, with 1

that affect water quality, flow, fisheries, and other river aspects. Federal open licenses for all of the dams are beginning to come up for renewal. Before each 40-50 year license is issued, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, state agencies, and interest groups like the Watershed Council will examine the proper operation of each hydroelectric facility to insure it is balanced with protection of the River and its recreational and natural values.

Zebra Mussels and other Invasive Species

A number of invasive species have taken hold in the watershed and threaten native species. These include: common reed (Phragmites), purple loosestrife, Eurasian milfoil and water chestnut; also, mute swans, asiatic clams, and woolly adelg. Fortunately, the Connecticut has not yet been invaded by Zebra mussels. The threat is very real, however, as they have taken hold and become a major species in nearby waters, e.g., the Hudson River and Lake Champlain.

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*Working in partnership with people
to protect the Connecticut River*