

Ripton Stream Reclassification Project Middlebury Headwater Candidate Tributaries

Very High Quality Surface Waters
Potential for Reclassifying to Class A1 from Class B2

VT Department of Environmental Conservation
Public Meeting
03/30/2021

Ripton Stream Reclassification Project

Project Background:

- In 12/2016 the Ripton Conservation Commission was contacted by members of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) and the Addison County River Watch Collaborative to discuss opportunities to submit petitions to reclassify three streams in Ripton from B2 to A1 – Alder Brook, Blue Bank Brook, and Goshen Brook. They reviewed:
 - the new state water classification Classes
 - water quality results that supported reclassification to A1
 - an overview of the petition process
 - discussion of impact on landowners within the watershed
- Subsequent to that meeting, the Ripton Conservation Commission researched and discussed the natural resource benefits, the work effort needed to undertake the project, and landowner impacts.

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Project Background:

- On 04/24/2017, the Ripton Conservation Commission presented the Reclassification proposal to the Ripton Select Board. The Select Board approved the project.
- On 09/05/2018, the Ripton Conservation Commission held a public meeting at the Ripton Community House. Notification letters were mailed to property owners within the watershed.
- On 10/01/2019, the Reclassification Project was presented to the Lincoln Select Board and met with approval.
- From 05/2017 through 12/2019, the Ripton Conservation Commission worked with members of the VT DEC to research, write and submit the Petitions.
- The Petitions were submitted to the VT DEC in 12/2019.
- From 12/2019 through 01/2021, the VT DEC reviewed the Petitions to ensure that they were Administratively Complete and to start their internal Procedures for Evaluating Petitions to Adopt, Amend, or Repeal Surface Water and Wetland Rules.

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Why submit these Petitions to reclassify these streams?

- These 3 streams, Adler Brook, Blue Bank Brook, and Goshen Brook, are all headwater streams and meet the highest water quality standards.
- Benefits of reclassifying these streams from B2 to A1:
 - Reflects the current conditions showing excellent/very good biological and chemical health, and aquatic habitat (also protected under Vermont's Anti-Degradation Policy).
 - Managed to achieve and maintain waters in their natural condition.
 - By statute (10 V.S.A. § 1253), all surface waters above 2,500 feet of elevation in Vermont are Class A(1).
 - Providing these streams with a higher level of protection will assist in managing our streams and wetlands in such a way as to help protect against the impacts of extreme weather events.
 - Protecting headwater streams is part of Vermont's overall effort to address water pollution.

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Alder Brook special characteristics:

- The Alder Brook Watershed lies within a Highest Priority Connectivity Block, a Highest Priority Interior Forest Block, and is within a 55,583 acre Habitat Block.
- The southern section of the Alder Brook watershed contains a section of Rare Physical Landscape.
- There are six areas of Threatened or Endangered Species within the Alder Brook watershed.
- A portion of the western section of the Alder Brook watershed falls within a Deer Wintering area.
- All of the streams and surface waters within the Alder Brook watershed are identified as Riparian Wildlife Connectivity corridors and are Highest Priority Surface Waters and Riparian Areas.
- There are 13 identified Class 2 wetlands in the Alder Brook watershed. These are thriving and undisturbed wetlands, and may qualify for reclassification to Class 1.

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Blue Bank Brook special characteristics:

- There are multiple Significant Natural Communities within the eastern and southeastern area of the Blue Bank Brook watershed.
- There are eleven Threatened or Endangered Plant Species locations within the Blue Bank Brook watershed.
- There are Uncommon Natural Communities both Plant (Montana Spruce-Fir Forest, Montana Yellow Birch, Red Spruce Forest) and Animal in the southeastern section.
- Blue Bank Brook and its tributaries have been identified as Highest Priority Surface Waters and its tributaries are identified as Riparian Wildlife Connectivity areas.
- The land within the Blue Bank Brook Watershed is identified as a Higher Priority Habitat Block, it is part of a Habitat Block that is greater than 50,000 acres, and it is within a Highest Priority Connectivity Block.

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Blue Bank Brook special characteristics (continued):

- There is a Mast Stand in the north eastern section of the Blue Bank Brook watershed.
- The southeastern area of the Blue Bank Brook watershed is inventoried as Rare Physical Landscape Diversity and there are several small areas of Rare Physical Landscape Diversity in the northern section.
- There are several sections along the Blue Bank Brook that are inventoried as Responsibility Physical Landscape Diversity.
- There are Rare Plant Species along the Blue Bank Brook and there are Rare Animal Species in the southeastern section of the Blue Bank Brook watershed.
- Class A(1) streams are already within the Blue Bank Brook watershed. The southwestern edge of the Blue Bank Brook watershed is within a Class A(1) watershed.
- Many thriving and undisturbed wetlands exist within the Blue Bank Brook watershed. Many are already classified as Class 2 and may qualify for reclassification to Class 1.

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Goshen Brook special characteristics:

- The southeastern edge of the Goshen Brook watershed contains several Rare Animal Species area.
- There are three Significant Natural Communities within the Goshen Brook watershed.
- The eastern edge of the Goshen Brook Watershed is very close to an area that contains Rare Species.
- The eastern edge of the Goshen Brook watershed contains an Upland Uncommon Natural Community.
- There are two Deer Wintering Areas within the Goshen Brook watershed.
- Goshen Brook and its tributaries are listed as Exemplary Surface Waters.
- The land within the Goshen Brook Watershed is identified as a Highest Priority Habitat Block by the VT Fish & Wildlife Department.
- The Goshen Brook watershed lies within a Highest Priority Connectivity Block, a Highest Priority Interior Forest Block, and is within a 34,569 acre Habitat Block.

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Goshen Brook special characteristics (continued):

- The southeastern section of the Goshen Brook watershed is identified as a Rare Physical Landscape and there are several sections identified as Responsibility Physical Landscapes.
- Goshen Brook and its tributaries are identified as Riparian Connectivity Areas and Highest Priority Areas.
- Class A(1) streams are already within the Goshen Brook watershed. The southwestern edge of the Goshen Brook watershed is within a Class A(1) watershed.
- Many thriving and undisturbed wetlands exist within the Goshen Brook watershed. Many are already classified as Class 2 and may qualify for reclassification to Class 1.