

*Bill begins process for protecting natural and recreational resource of northern Vermont*

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House today passed a bill authored by Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) that initiates the process of designating Vermont's Missisquoi and Trout Rivers "wild and scenic."

"The Missisquoi and Trout Rivers are remarkable natural and cultural resources. This bill will help ensure future generations may cherish and enjoy these local treasures," said Welch. "I am pleased the House of Representatives agrees with the importance of protecting these Vermont assets and ensuring they are managed for public enjoyment for years to come."

The Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2008, [H.R. 3667](#), passed 299 to 118. The study is the first step before a river receives protection.

The Missisquoi River is part of the 740 mile Northern Forest Canoe Trail and home to some of the best flat water paddling in Vermont. The two rivers are bordered by the largest silver maple floodplain forest remaining in the state and are habitat to diverse animal life including brook trout, rare freshwater mussels, and spiny soft-shell turtles.

In addition to the natural and recreational resources of the rivers, they both have significant historical and cultural value with Abenaki Tribe archeological sites along the floodplain.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, protects rivers and assures they are managed to ensure public enjoyment by prohibiting federally licensed dams, prohibiting federal water projects that would adversely impact the remarkable values of the river, ensuring water quality is maintained or improved, mandating the creation of a cooperative river management plan. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act does not grant federal authority over private land use or local zoning, nor does it dictate what land-owners can or cannot do with their property.

## **Welch bill protecting Missisquoi and Trout Rivers passes House**

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More info on the Act and the designation distinction can be found at: <http://www.rivers.gov/>

The bill has the local support of the Missisquoi River Basin Association and Friends of the Missisquoi Bay.