

jennifer deraspe, Denmark, ME.

I was born and raised in Mexico, Maine, often exploring and rambling along the Swift and Androscoggin Rivers. Because of my appreciation for the outdoors and the beauty of these connected rivers, my chosen field has been to bring folks into the outdoor arena as a Registered Maine Guide. I am a small business owner and founder of Nurture Through Nature, an eco-retreat center located in Denmark, in the south western region of Oxford County. I have been a Recreational Maine Guide for over 20 years. Taking people paddling in Maine has proven to be very satisfying and viable as a chosen career.

In June, 2019, I was inspired to paddle the full length of the Androscoggin River, from Errol to Topsham, on a solo journey to learn more about my home river and its value to the communities it passes through. On that 13 day quest, I experienced a majestic, beautiful river way, with incredible natural beauty and deep quietude.

I could image a great river trail with parks, resting places, amenities, camp grounds, shuttle services, outfitters and guides finding quality work and providing an amazing Maine experience to both Maine residents and tourists, alike. Honestly, I was surprised it has not already happened.

The Androscoggin River is an untapped resource for eco-tourism and nature-based economic opportunities for the State of Maine. Because of the great work of organizations such as the Mahoosuc Land Trust, Androscoggin Landtrust, Maine Rivers.org and the Androscoggin River Watershed Council; the shores and waters are becoming more accessible for outdoor enthusiasts and the water quality is being restored. Industry and governmental organizations have also played a significant role in river restoration. The water is remarkably cleaner since the days when I grew up. Wildlife was abundant and there was very little development along her shores.

Having accessible open green spaces in our town is valuable for the local citizens sense of place and pride as well as their health and wellbeing. The dam owners ought to find a way to make the trails and parks open, safe and accessible for the communities they are tapping into for resources. Use would be at the community-member's own risk and full responsibility falls on the person choosing to be on this land owned by the dam. Keeping and creating parks and trails shows the dam owner's commitment to being a good neighbor and honoring the community they are in business with. In addition, having safe, well-maintained and marked/mapped portage trails around the dams is the right thing to do in sharing the river with the community. Having the portage trail be the shortest possible length makes the river trail for accessible and user-friendly for the through paddler. I feel the owners of dams ought to make these efforts to be in alignment with the fact that the river is not owned by anyone group, organization, town or corporation.

I feel this river offers a significant opportunity as a paddling river trail, for canoers, kayakers, white water enthusiasts and anglers, alike.

Bringing greater signage, mapping, portage and access points to the river opens up a whole world for the economic development to the towns in which the river travels through, especially in the Rumford Falls area around the Island, canal and business district of Rumford as a White Water paddlers' destination.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer A Deraspe, owner
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Document Content(s)

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