

“The River – The Forest – Its People”

The Story of Wytopotlock and The Mattawamkeag River Lowlands

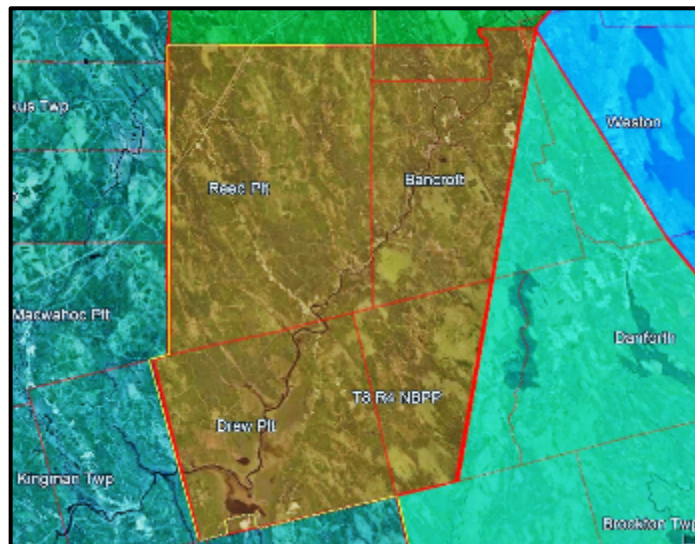
For the GEGR there may be no better example of a remote and once thriving logging community where it's past and future is indelibly linked to the surrounding forest and to the **Mattawamkeag River**.



The **Village of Wytopotlock** it is a work-in-progress, truly “a heritage reclaimed.” With a population at 1/3rd of its high point, a number of its residents still have roots to the early loggers and lumbermen of the past. One young forestry school grad, born and raised in Wytopotlock, recently returned as a 3rd generation owner in the family logging business. Much of this 100,000 acre landscape resembles the productive soils and privately-owned forests of the Haynesville Woods. One major difference is the 32,000 acre “conserved” **Reed Forest**, a heavily forested landscape purchased by The Conservation Fund and funded by Apple Computer in 2015. Whoever is to be the future owner of this conserved landscape, the Reed Forest will forever be managed as a highly productive timber factory, ensured thru a working forest easement held by

The Forest Society of Maine; an easement linking harvest volumes to specific levels of stocking - a first in the State of Maine.

“**The River**”, once the hub of activity, is again the focus of efforts to reinvigorate community connectivity and use. **Drew Deadwater**, which begins below the State Route 171 Bridge at the entrance of Wytopotlock Stream, ends 12 miles downstream at the Page Farm public landing. The **Page Farm** is an upland game habitat unit of the 12,000-acre Mattawamkeag River Wildlife Management Area which straddles the Drew Deadwater section of the River. The watershed area of the Lower Mattawamkeag also supports cold water brook trout habitat in tributary streams such as Smith, Finn, Hawkins and Meadow Brooks. The State of Maine has agreed to explore the siting and construction of a new boat access site near the Village of Wytopotlock.



When the school closed in 2008 the Town of Reed retained ownership of the building and is now used as a municipal building and food pantry. Other community assets include a newly reinvented fish and game clubhouse as a privately-owned commercial lodge, a locally-owned sugar bush, organic and artistic growers of plant and nursery stock, several big game outfitters, hunting and recreational guides, rental cabins, an active snowmobile club and a small wood using cottage industry specializing in Northern White Cedar.

Upriver from Wytopitlock is the **Village of Bancroft**, now a part of the ten-million acre Unorganized Territory of Maine. The Township encompasses the historic and culturally significant **Confluence of**

the Mattawamkeag and Baskahegan Rivers. Beans Falls on the Baskahegan, above the confluence, earns the distinction of the only class IV whitewater in the entire GEG Region. Plans for the confluence include an improved hand carry canoe and kayak launch and mini hiking trail highlighting the historic significance of these two rivers from Native American travel to the immigration of European settlers. The confluence also marks the dividing point between the Ferry Bridge and **Reed-Drew Lowland Sections** of the Mattawamkeag River Water Trail. A short but safe distance upstream from Beans Falls is the takeout for the Lower Baskahegan River Water Trail.

Five miles upstream from the Confluence is the **Ferry Bridge** Mattawamkeg River access, soon to be an improved, state-owned boat access site on the road to Haynesville. Between the Ferry Bridge and the Confluence are two class II sections of water known as Ledge Falls and Scutaze.

Bancroft is home to a cottage business whose owner returned in retirement to restore the family farm raising ram Boulet sheep, and specializing in hand-dyed yarn. Most of the cleared lands in Bancroft once supported small dairy farms and some of these remaining cleared lands are used to grow hay and fodder. It has been said the soils in Bancroft may hold the best potential for local agriculture of any in the entire GEGR.

The train whistles of the former European and North American Railroad signaling its passage thru Reed and Bancroft now hail from a division of the Irving Corp of New Brunswick. To those unaccustomed to rural life, the railroad may seem to be the only sound of man regularly breaking the silence of this peaceful landscape. Even the quiet and scenic back roads that trek for miles along the River, thru the forests and widely distributed fields of the communities of Drew, Reed and Bancroft engender thoughts of a wide bike trail more than a public highway.

While this Lower Mattawamkeag River area contributes much to the, historic, cultural, and natural diversity of the Greater East Grand Region, it is science that may have revealed its ultimate importance to humanity. Some evidence suggests the lowlands of the Mattawamkeag River watershed contain the most resilient soils to climate change of any location in the lower 48.