



\$50,000 Raised for Run of River Whitewater Recreation Area

Skowhegan, Maine—The Run of River Committee has raised \$50,000 to fund next steps of the Run of River Whitewater Recreation Area, sited for the Kennebec River Gorge in downtown Skowhegan.

A Quimby Family Foundation Grant for \$25,000 and a \$25,000 matching gift from a Maine Community Foundation Donor Advised Fund will help cover the costs of next steps, including supplemental data collection required for permitting.

“We are thrilled that we’re gaining momentum with Run of River fundraising and that people believe in the project enough to invest,” said Kristina Cannon, Run of River Committee member and Main Street Skowhegan executive director. “We can’t thank the Quimby Family Foundation and the donor enough for their support—it’s tremendous.”

During the last six months, the Run of River Committee, along with project engineer Kleinschmidt Associates and architect McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group, met with Brookfield Renewable, U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies to determine requirements for permitting.

As a result of these meetings, the committee intends to use \$25,000 of the grant funding for field data collection, which will include bathymetric surveying of the riverbed and a debris survey to determine the location of remains from the railroad bridge that washed away during the flood of 1987.

Data from the field work will be used to create computer-generated 3D hydraulic models for fisheries review—a requirement by agencies in recent meetings. These 3D models will cost an estimated \$65,000, leaving a \$40,000 gap in funding. While data is being gathered this summer, the committee will work to raise money to cover this gap.

Once the committee has completed all requirements, permit applications can be submitted. The permitting process is expected to take one to two years.

Committee members hope to start construction for the whitewater park in the summer of 2021, a timeline that will coincide with the installation of a fish passage apparatus at Weston Dam, located just upriver from the proposed site of the whitewater park.

In addition to funding, the committee received other good news last week—Skowhegan has been named an Outdoor Sports Institute (OSI) Community Partner. OSI will work with the Run of River Committee and Main Street Skowhegan to foster and grow an active group of outdoor recreation enthusiasts in Skowhegan. Led by local stakeholders, the initiative will



include trainings, programming, and outdoor gear to teach people the skills to recreate safely.

"We are excited that OSI recognizes Skowhegan as a community that has great potential when it comes to outdoor recreation," said Cannon. "With the plans for the Run of River Whitewater Recreation Area—which will be a venue for whitewater paddling, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and more—it's critical that we engage our local residents and offer them the knowledge and tools to use the recreation area."

The committee and Main Street Skowhegan intend to make trainings free for all, and plans are in the works to create a gear locker that would allow residents to borrow equipment like kayaks, canoes, mountain bikes, cross-country skis, and more at no cost.

"We want to make sure that people from Skowhegan and the local area can get out and get active in the river and on the trails. We want Run of River to be more than just an attraction for people from away; we want it to benefit our local community members as well," said Cannon.

These announcements come only a few short weeks after Run of River Committee partner Main Street Skowhegan received a \$10,000 grant for development of a trail sited for the whitewater recreation area in downtown Skowhegan. The committee, Main Street Skowhegan, Somerset Woods Trustees, the Skowhegan Parks & Recreation Department, and invested local citizens are working together to construct this trail as well as others in the region.

"Run of River is going to be a game-changer for Skowhegan—economically and from a health and wellness perspective—and we're working hard to make sure the plan becomes a reality," Cannon said.