



CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

SPECIAL RESOURCE
RECONNAISSANCE STUDY • 1998



Executive Summary

NEW ENGLAND'S LONGEST RIVER, the Connecticut flows south over 400 miles from its headwaters on the Canadian border to Long Island Sound. It drains some 11,000 square miles in the four states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Nearly two and a half million people live in the 390 cities and towns that occupy this watershed.

THE VALLEY HAS LONG BEEN NOTED for its scenic beauty and has figured prominently in the history of the nation. Originally agricultural, the southern portion of the valley became an important industrial zone. Expanding around the nucleus of Springfield Armory, this segment became known for skilled metalworking, earning the title "Precision Valley."

OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS federal, state and local governments spent more than \$600 million to restore the river's potential for wildlife habitat and recreation. In FY 1995 Congress directed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct this Special Resource Reconnaissance Study, particularly to address how the NPS could contribute to current efforts to promote the conservation of resources in the valley and their use and enjoyment by the public. An important consideration was to see how the NPS might enhance the operations of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, established in 1991 and managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

THE STUDY TEAM RELIED heavily on planning agencies and on knowledgeable people in the region, assembled at two workshops, the first of which identified five themes as emblematic of the valley. While these themes are inherently interesting and informative, with the exception of precision manufacturing, none individually satisfies the criteria for national significance.

THE SIZE AND CONFIGURATION of the valley, the dispersion of its resources, the diverse pattern of land ownership, and the multitude of jurisdictions, make it unfeasible for the establishment of a new NPS unit. Other mechanisms exist under which the NPS can provide recognition and assistance to an area without becoming a primary landowner and manager.

ONE SUCH APPROACH is through National Heritage Areas or Corridors. Although the Connecticut Valley differs in important respects from recently established areas, designation might be feasible if strong public demand were evident and if inherent obstacles such as the size of the area, its division among four states, and the lack of a single potential management entity could be overcome. A Precision Manufacturing Corridor is more typical but still presents certain difficulties.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, particularly between the NPS and FWS, offer many advantages. The strengths of each agency are complementary. With additional funding, they could work together to take a holistic approach toward safeguarding and interpreting the exceptional resources of this valley. ❄️



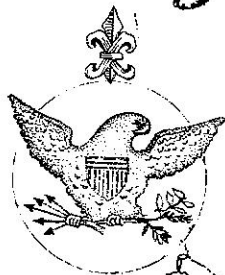
Precision Manufacturing



American Precision
Museum

Windsor

Springfield



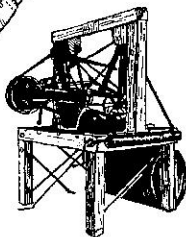
Vermont

New Hampshire

Massachusetts



Greenfield



Boston

Springfield Armory
National Historic Site

Springfield

New York

Connecticut

Eli Whitney
Museum



Hartford



Colt Collections
Hartford, CT

Middletown

Rhode
Island

New Haven

