

Skowhegan Gorge Run of River Project

SKOWHEGAN GORGE FOOTBRIDGE

The Skowhegan Gorge Footbridge is located at the head of the gorge, just downstream of the dam. The footbridge provides excellent viewing opportunities for visitors taking a boat on the river below.

The footbridge also provides pedestrian access to downstream Skowhegan, which could increase patronage of downstream drops and restaurants by guests viewing and paddling. While the gradient on either shoreline adjacent to the bridge is prohibitively steep for river access, the downstream extension to the footbridge at head work would allow along the gorge area, providing opportunities for viewing, resting, and picnicking.



DEBE PARK

Debe Park consists of a river access trail, canoe portage trail, and an open lot for use as a parking area.

This site could serve as the staging area and access point for a variety of Gorge activities on river-crafts and would be an ideal location for the upstream staging area for a whitewater park. The open lot and use as the Debe Park stage and trailer provide ample parking and opportunities such as:

has the potential for other recreation:

- A playground and picnic area
- Formal parking area for Gorge and town events
- Staging area for hiking Debe Park trail
- Put tables for paddler
- Shuttle location for paddler



DEBE PARK STEPS AND RIVER ACCESS TRAIL



The river access trail proceeds toward the water directly from the Debe Park area. The trail follows a shallow to moderate slope and a second smaller set of steps provides access to the descent. The elevation at the terminus of the river access trail is rocky. Improvements are recommended to upgrade the trail and include:

- Additional steps for river access
- Traditional signage
- Shrub vegetation clearing

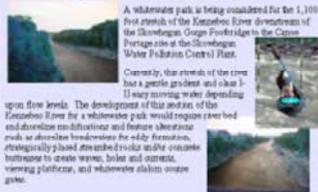
DEBE PARK CANOE PORTAGE TRAIL



The canoe portage trail extends for approximately 0.15 miles (100 feet) to the Debe Park steps to the river gorge at the Skowhegan River Pollution Control Plant. The portage trail follows the river and maintains the same elevation for the majority of the distance, making it a flat, easy gradient. The portage trail is well marked and maintained. Improvements recommended include:

- Limited vegetation clearing where viewing platforms in the Gorge

POTENTIAL WHITewater PARK



A whitewater park is being considered for the 1,100 foot stretch of the Kennebec River downstream of the Skowhegan Gorge Footbridge to the Canoe Portage site at the Skowhegan River Pollution Control Plant.

Currently, the stretch of the river has a gentle gradient and a class I-II easy running water depending upon flow levels. The development of this section of the Kennebec River for a whitewater park would require river bed and shoreline modifications and feature American-made or aluminum headwaters for safe formation, strategically placed dams/boulders or other obstacles, infrastructure to create waves, boat and canoe viewing platforms, and whatever other unique gates.

COBURN PARK



Coburn Park is comprised of a carriage road for pedestrian and vehicle use, picnic tables, picnic open areas, and a gazebo. The Park provides opportunities for walking, picnicking, bicycling and other leisure activities. There is currently no formal river access via Coburn Park, however, there is an informal trail down a steep slope leading to the river.

Although the gradient along the river downstream of the three diversions at the Park is prohibitively steep for direct river access, with limited improvements, the Park could and should readily be incorporated into the river access plan for the Skowhegan Gorge area. The Park could serve as an event staging area, provide river and wildlife viewing through the construction of viewing platforms along the edge of the gorge, and serve as a staging for paddlers. Suggestive for improvements include:

- Reorganization of some parking and footpaths
- Construction of viewing platforms
- Improved access to the river



POTENTIAL NEW RIVER ACCESS



There is an existing sagged road providing access to the river at the top edge, east of Coburn Park. As this site is undeveloped, providing easy access to the river, and is larger in magnitude with the capacity of the current canoe portage, it is proposed that this area be developed to provide additional river access to paddlers. An added benefit of the location of this segment is that paddlers need not travel through downstream Skowhegan if accessing the river via Debe Park and paddling downstream to this location. This could increase patronage at downstream headwaters and drops.

The gradient along this shoreline at this site is shallow to moderate, providing opportunities for trail improvements as:

- Formal access and a parking area
- Access steps



CANOE PORTAGE AT EGRESS



The canoe portage will make at the river just northeast of the Skowhegan River Pollution Control Plant. The Debe Park canoe portage trail starts above Egress and extends along the north side of the river.

Parking for the canoe portage access point is limited to roadside parking along the entrance to the plant. This site is designed for canoe portaging and appears to serve current demand sufficiently. However, it is anticipated that increased recreation use as a result of improvements to the Gorge area and associated recreation sites, including the potential whitewater park, will bring an increase in traffic and volume of use to river access sites. This site does not have the capacity to serve the expected increase in use. Although limited improvements could be made, an alternate take-out and parking area will need to be considered.

