A Dynamic River

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Riverbeds are in a constant state of change. If you watched the Poultney River over thousands of years, you'd see the riverbed twist and turn all across the floodplain. It does this to slow down the water and disperse its energy. Sometimes human development is affected by a river's natural functions.

Here, the river was trying to push into the floodplain but was causing erosion that threatened not only local property, but also a well that is the college and town's drinking water source. The rock "rip rap" was installed to divert the water and protect the streambank.

Every action causes a reaction. The energy that is deflected by the rip rap goes elsewhere in the riverbed. Look at the opposite bank—do you see signs of erosion?

As you walk further downstream, look for other places where the river is displacing its energy. In one spot, you'll see wooden log vanes similar to the one at the right. Log vanes are a new technology that more gently diverts water from sensitive streambank areas.

Poultney Mettowee River Watershed Partnership

Planted vegetation helps to stabilize eroding banks.

Poultney Mettowee River Watershed Partnership

Newly planted trees will help stabilize banks and provide shade to cool the river.

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A log vane being installed on the Poultney River.