

Basin 4: Shores and minor tributaries of lower Lake Champlain.

No waterfalls or gorges are known in this basin.

Basin 5: Shores and minor tributaries of upper Lake Champlain.

This basin contains the Champlain shoreline north of Ferrisburg but excludes the mouths of the major rivers. It contains a single site:

Shelburne Falls, LaPlatte River, Shelburne.

Report 14, Shelburne Falls, LaPlatte River, Shelburne, Chittenden County, Vermont.

Site 54, surveyed 12 May 1983 by P.F. Zika and J.C. Jenkins.

Low cascades in the bed of the LaPlatte River with adjacent cliffs.

Atlas map 36, USGS Burlington 15' quadrangle. The falls are 50 yards north of the crossroads the maps called Shelburne Falls, and accessible by a short walk from Irish Hill Road.

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The LaPlatte is a medium-sized lowland river, averaging over 50 feet across; it receives treated dairy and municipal wastes from Hinesburg and agricultural runoff all along its length. It is classified as C water below Hinesburg and B water at Shelburne Falls, and the 1982 Water Quality Assessment notes that the Hinesburg plant had operational problems and the river did not meet dissolved oxygen standards. In May, we noted moderate pollution.

The falls are in a wooded valley in agricultural countryside; several houses are nearby. The west bank has cedar and hardwoods, the east bank has second-growth hardwoods. A bridge and several houses are visible from the falls.

The site is near the contact between the Ordovician Shelburne limestone and the Cutting dolomite, and appears to be largely limestone. The falls are about 50 feet wide by 100 feet long; the water cascades down shelves and low falls with a total drop of about 20 feet. The rocks are grooved and somewhat rippled but no striking features are present. Along the west bank are vegetated limestone ledges about 25 feet high and 75 yards long. The rock is orange and typical of the Champlain Valley limestones.

No botanical records are included; because of pollution and disturbance the area is not particularly interesting. A single rare plant, the sedge Carex formosa was found about 25 feet from the water along a small creek on the east side of the river. The species is currently known from about ten sites in Vermont.

Again, because of pollution, the area does not appear to be an important recreational site. It is important for the oxygenation of a river with pollution problems.

About half a mile below this site, the river has a wooded floodplain and there is a line of limestone cliffs about 80 feet high and one-quarter mile long running along the west edge of the floodplain. This area is not a waterfall or gorge and so is not treated here, but might be mentioned as a natural area of

considerable beauty from which there are old records of several rare plants.

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Summary: Rural setting, indifferent rocks and falls, indifferent botany except for one rare plant, no seclusion, no trash, polluted water, perhaps light use for fishing.