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**Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition**  
**May 25, 2006**  
**3:00 – 5:00 p.m.**  
**@ MDEP, Canco Road, Portland**

**Next Meeting of the PRWC Board**

**Thursday July 27<sup>th</sup> 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM**

**In attendance:** Forrest Bell-PRW, Jeff Varricchione-DEP, Betty Williams-CCSWCD, Diane Gould-EPA, Matt Craig- CBEP, Will Plumley- FOPR, Richard Curtis, Gorham Sebago Land Trust, Dusti Faucher, FOPR, Merrie Cartwright- NOAA Fisheries, John MacKinnon- Windham Town Council, Dale Rines- Gorham Parks and Conservation Commission, Pete Clark- Town of Falmouth

**I. Introductions** – Will called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

**II. General Updates**

**SD Warren vs ME Board of Environmental Protection** – Dusti reported that the Supreme Court’s decided 9 – 0 on May 15<sup>th</sup> in favor of the state’s position on dam discharges. Maine (and all states) can use 401 to rule on dam relicensing, to make sure that dams meet state water quality standards. This will affect 1,000 dams coming up for relicensing in the U.S. USF&W had proscriptive power in the past but this was changed by the energy bill, leaving states to hold the line on water quality.

Dusti noted that this applies only to federally licensed dams (FERC) – hydropower dams and some reservoir dams. In navigable fresh waters, Inland Fish and Wildlife can order fish passage.

There was great local coverage on the Supreme Court decision, e.g., Portland Press Herald, American Journal in Westbrook.

Will noted that the court sent a strong message to American business on their role in protecting the environment.

**Presumpscot Watershed Initiative** – Matt displayed a map showing 55 dots distributed all over the watershed, indicating the locations of PWI projects including stream crossing BMP sites, YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) buffer and planting projects, potential agriculture project sites, and golf course projects. He noted the 4 sonde locations: at the Pleasant River (Pope Rd), at the base of the West Branch of the Piscataqua, and the base of the East Branch of the Piscataqua, and near the mouth of the Presumpscot. The sondes will collect continuous data on DO, temperature, turbidity, conductivity, and pH every 15 minutes for 6 months.

Betty noted that the YCC is getting started up. She asked PRWC members to contact her if they know of an erosion site that needs work or an area that needs buffer planting.

Will noted the need for coordination of electrofishing and the location of the data sondes.

Matt will develop a mock-up web page for the PWI and will look for input from the PRWC.

Will noted that we will need future funding to keep the sondes and data analysis going after the grant runs out. We should make a list of things to fund beyond 2007.

Matt noted that we need to provide 25% match to the grant and passed around a table asking people to note their participation (volunteer or non-federally funded) so it can be counted as match.

**Report from Albuquerque Targeted Watershed Meeting** – Will noted that there were 12 grants awarded nationally this year. This year's grantees plus three of last year's grantees and one from two years ago gathered in Albuquerque to share presentations on their projects. He highlighted two presentations that interested him especially: Cheat River in Ohio, where acid mine drainage is a very visible problem and solution; and Willamet R. in Oregon where high growth rate is leading to thermal loading. The Willamet project is addressing this problem with a market-based thermal credits approach. Will wondered if we could use a similar market-based approach to address sediment loads, BOD, impervious surface issues by setting goals and allocating percent reduction to sources. Dusti noted that the lack of strong county government here could be a hindrance.

EPA participants at the Albuquerque meeting noted that the money for the program is shrinking and that the successes of the grantees can help keep the program funded.

John asked how similar the projects are. Matt noted that there was another project located in an NEP and it was very similar to ours. There were some in the marketing realm. One in Puddle Creek Lake in Kansas had a no-till farming initiative to reduce agricultural runoff. Other projects were interested in the way we will measure success (numbers of projects, feet of fencing, trees planted, etc.) since it will be difficult to show changes in water quality over 2 years.

**National River Rally** – Matt noted he was impressed by sessions on displaying quantitative data. One program filmed their entire shoreline and ground-truthed the video to GIS. They created a website where you can click on a spot on a map and “drive along the bank,” and see discharges via video. Matt may be able to work with Rosemary (the project's database expert) and tie some video footage to the database.

Dusti also attended and was struck by the warnings about potential natural disasters. The take home message is that you may lose your infrastructure. Be prepared and back up your data. Dusti also noted that she and Naomi Shallit nominated Bill Townsend from Maine Rivers for a River Heroes Award, which was presented at the banquet.

Forrest noted that he learned that the state of Vermont is studying the physical and geomorphological status of their rivers. Rivers are trying to reach equilibrium – sometimes erosion is a necessary adjustment to changes in the landscape. We need a better understanding of the impacts of development, dams, etc. on the Presumpscot. Jeff expressed frustration that Maine lacks a state geomorphologist while Vermont has 5 full-time staff working on the physical status of rivers.

**Macroinvertebrate Sampling** – Jeff provided a handout on past macroinvertebrate sampling in the Presumpscot watershed. DEP does sampling on a rotating schedule and this year the primary focus is on the Penobscot. He said it is possible that DEP staff could do rock baskets at 4 to 6 sites in the Presumpscot this summer with financial help from us to fund the analysis (4 rock basket sites, i.e. baskets set above and below each of two bmp sites = \$4,000). We could also do a rapid assessment with a kick net which would give a sense of the community, a cheaper approach.

Leon from DEP says it is possible to see a significant change in community status in 2 years in a small stream (e.g., Riverside Golf Course which is now in non-attainment status). We need to make a decision in the next two weeks whether we want to do the sampling this year, then we can choose the sites before August. PRWC agreed that the Executive Committee plus Jeff and Merrie would make a decision via e-mail.

## **II. Funded Project Updates**

**Fish Assemblage Study** – Will noted that the PRWC Executive Committee had provided \$12,000 to support the fish assemblage project. Diane reported that the CBEP Executive Committee has recommended in their draft annual budget that CBEP provide an additional \$13,000 of which \$8,000 would support data analysis and \$5,000 would support spring sampling (to include the diadromous fish). Chris Yoder, the project lead, has agreed that the PRWC and CBEP funds will be used to complete sampling in the Presumpscot and to analyze the Presumpscot data and provide a report. Chris will be in Portland in June and would like to work with the PRWC Fisheries Committee. Dusti and Merrie agreed to take the lead on pulling this group together. Diane also asked to be included in this initial meeting. Karen and Diane were asked to keep in contact with Dusti and Merrie regarding scheduling a meeting between Chris and the Fisheries Committee.

**Presumpscot River Guide** – Erin has met with Fred about her draft. There is no additional update.

## **V. Gravel Pit** (taken out of order on the agenda)

Will reported that the academic year has ended and Erwin Novak is still in Greece. He has agreed to get the final report to us. Will stressed the importance of the conclusions of the study, i.e., 42% increase in gravel pit acreage over the course of the study (1998 to 2004). By our next meeting we should have the written report and should discuss how to disseminate the results. Dusti suggested sharing it with Town Councils. Gorham is now struggling with a difficult situation in Grondham Pit. Windham also has a difficult pit issue.

#### **IV. Revisiting the Plan**

Will stressed the need to look beyond the CBEP for funding. We need to spend more time looking at and referencing the Plan. Dusti noted that the Plan deals primarily with the mainstem and that we are looking now at problems in the tributaries. We will need to update the Plan, but not for a few years. Will noted that the Executive Committee will wrestle with the issue of revisiting the Plan and using it to guide our activities.

Dusti asked that we think about what our role will be when the request is made to IF&W for fish passage at Cumberland Mills.

Will noted that both of these are part of our mission –keeping the Plan as a living document and acting as a clearinghouse.

#### **Other Issues**

Dusti noted that 60 kids were out on the river as part of the King Middle School cleanup.

#### **Next Meeting**

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