

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
September 28, 2006
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
@ MDEP, Canco Road, Portland

Next Meeting of the PRWC Board

Thursday December 7th 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, Irwin Novak - USM, Sandra Cort – FOPR, Erin Crowley – Americorps, Mary Cerullo – FOCB, Karen Young -CBEP

I. Introductions – Will led a round of introductions and agreed to move Matt’s PWI update to the end of the meeting.

II. Cumulative Impacts Committee Update

- USM Geology Gravel Pit Study Results – Irwin Novak handed out copies of the report “Mapping Sand and Gravel Mining within the Presumpscot River Watershed, Maine, Using Remote Sensing and Other Digital Data in a G.I.S. Environment.” Irwin noted that he lives in North Gorham near the gravel pits and has some personal connection to the geomorphological issues and the stresses on the lives of neighbors from noise generated by the pits. He thanked the PRWC for their support of his students Christopher Jones and Justin Rich and noted that they are doing well. Our small grant advanced knowledge of the region and was a good “bang for the buck.”

Basically the report examined the growth of mining in the watershed from 1998 to 2004. Table 1 in the report indicated that there was a 41.5% increase over the study period, with mined area representing a total of .5% of the watershed (653 mined acres out of 131,000 acres). For the study, only Gorham had digitized tax maps available to the students. Imagery used was 1998 and 2001 high resolution digital orthorectified aerial photographs and 2004 satellite imagery. The resolution of the 2004 SPOT imagery was only 5 meters so acreage had to be estimated.

Irwin noted that the value of the gravel mining industry is at least \$40 million for Cumberland County (“gravel is white gold”). The environmental impact of the industry is not known. Dusti noted that it is a quality of life issue since the pits are noisy. In a few cases, old pit areas have been reclaimed and made into parks (e.g. Scarborough). Will and Irwin expressed an interest in an educational workshop to address potential mining-related issues. For example, Grondin has applied to DEP to lower the water table. This would eliminate any buffering action if there were fuel spills, etc. and could impact the hydrology of nearby wetlands. Follow-up steps suggested were to work with towns to make sure they

have appropriate language in their master plans and to contact GPCOG about a regional planning role, perhaps through Rosemary.

III. Fisheries Committee Update

- Highland Lake Fish Passage Project – Dusti reported that she and Chris Yoder and his MBI staff spent a day together successfully selecting access points between Mallison and Little Falls. Testing was done in August with DEP’s help. In addition, Chris tested from Cumberland Mills down and noted that Stripers are not getting above Presumpscot Falls. He is now writing the data report. He and his staff will be back in the spring for anadromous fish sampling (shad, alewife, bluebacks).

Jeff noted that he saw an article about reconsideration of which rivers are defined as salmon rivers. Could the Presumpscot be added? It was noted that Chris did not see salmon but found one Atlantic sturgeon. The Press Herald had an article about fly-fishing for salmon in the Penobscot.

Karen noted that DEP is sampling the Presumpscot for dioxin (as part of their SWAT toxics sampling program).

.IV. Open Space Update

- Local and Regional Land Trust Collaboration – Rich, Forrest and Will have begun discussions of ways to develop a regional collaboration of local land trust groups with the river watershed as the focus, perhaps changing the name of the Gorham Sebago Land Trust to be more inclusive of other Presumpscot watershed towns. Groups that could be part of a larger collaboration would include GSLT, Friends of Riverton Trolley Park, and Portland Trails. We need to get Windham, Falmouth and others to the table.

Karen noted that Maine Coastal Land Trust is active in the watershed. How can we bring in the Maine Land Trust Network? She noted that Bob Houston (US Fish and Wildlife) is mapping conserved lands. Jeff suggested that regional land trusts be invited to an annual PRWC meeting.

V. Funded Project Updates

- Presumpscot Watershed Guide Revision – Forrest noted that a draft revision is developing slowly. Dusti, Will and Matt agreed to serve as editors.
- Macroinvertebrate sampling opportunities – Jeff noted that the next opportunity for macroinvertebrate sampling will be next year.

Jeff noted that there is an Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) to restore trout habitat and populations. Francis Brautigham does not want to devote much time to the Presumpscot. He sees the Royal River watershed (Collyer Brook) as more of a priority. Dusti suggested we look at Chris Yoder’s data to see what the

Eastern Brook Trout population looks like in the Presumpscot and show it to Francis. Perhaps we can apply for a grant next year. Francis has indicated that Mill Brook and Colley Wright Brook might be the best areas to focus on in the Presumpscot. We will put planning for National Fish Hatchery Action Plan/EBTJV funding on the next agenda.

Will expressed surprise that all the upper reaches of the tribs are classified B. There may be opportunities for upgrades.

Matt and Forrest noted that they will combine forces with Jeff V to look at opportunities for macroinvertebrate sampling at Riverside Golf Course.

- Future Funding – Karen noted that there is \$2500 in this year’s CBEP workplan for the PRWC, plus funding for the fish assemblage study. The group agreed that we need to look at the larger issue of keeping the projects going after the PWI funding is gone. Betty is organizing a regional YCC meeting, which is a good approach. We will put a session on current and future funding for the PWI on the next agenda and will start the discussion in the Executive Committee. We can look at WHIP, 319, other grant opportunities, etc.

Jeff suggested that we do a working session to prioritize grant and restoration opportunities. Karen noted that the Casco Bay Habitat Restoration Committee will meet this week to begin discussing priorities. The Executive Committee (plus Jeff and any other interested PRWC members) should look at what the Habitat committee comes up with and discuss these priorities and funding opportunities further.

VI. Issue Discussion – Open Forum on the Presumpscot River (deferred)

II. Return to Cumulative Impacts Update

- PWI update – Will noted that most of the members present participated in the PWI meeting which preceded the PRWC meeting. For those who did not, Matt noted that all the projects are moving forward, including database development, GIS mapping and maps for schools, stream crossings, agricultural buffers, golf courses, yardscaping, and YCC activities. Matt showed the group the web page he is working on and asked for feedback on the toolbar, the amount of information and the overall design. Comments included a preference for one row of text rather than two columns, simplicity of design, and a more colorful layout. Matt will do a temporary paste-up and ask for more feedback. He will highlight the strength of the PRWC partnership. Will noted that we need to think about a logo as well.

VII. December 7th Meeting Agenda

Agenda will include:

- Discussion of applying for Eastern Brook Trout funding
- Current and future funding to support PWI, PRWC activities