

**Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition**  
**January 24, 2008**  
**3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**@Gilsland Farm, Maine Audubon**

**2008 Upcoming Meetings of the PRWC Board**

March 27, 2008  
May 22, 2008  
July 24, 2008  
September 25, 2008  
December 4, 2008

**In attendance:** Forrest Bell- PRW, Diane Gould-EPA, Matt Craig- CBEP, Will Plumley-FOPR, Richard Curtis, PRLT, Karen Young – CBEP, Bill Hancock- Audubon, Molly Just- City of Westbrook, Jeff Varricchione-DEP

**I. Introductions** – Will led a round of introductions. Due to the small turnout, the agenda items addressing 2008 priorities and actions were postponed until the March meeting. Also, the meeting was shortened to 1 hour.

**VI. Open Forum on the Presumpscot River –**

Forrest noted that Karen Young will be leaving the CBEP after 6 years in her position. Karen recalled the conflicts faced by the committee in the early stages of developing the management plan and the great progress that has been made on the river in recent years, including Smelt Hill Dam removal and the Cumberland Mills agreement. She hopes we continue to do great things in the future. Will noted that CBEP was the convening entity for the development of the plan. He expressed gratitude for Karen’s acceptance of the planning process when she started and her ongoing support for the PRWC.

Molly noted that Westbrook is developing an open space/recreational parks plan. The first public meeting was held last week. The need for additional trails and access to the river was mentioned. This will be a 6 month process with the Plan expected in May/June. The role for the PRWC could be access to knowledge (e.g., existing paths near the river), and acting as a soundingboard. Will noted that he and Richard both work in Westbrook.

Will reported that Windham is convening an Outdoor Activity Coalition which will focus on outdoor recreation in Windham. The first meeting is next week.

Also, Windham may purchase the historical Parsons Smith House on River Rd. in South Windham. The property includes 180 acres which is protected against subdivision. Also, the character of the house is protected. The house is now in private hands. The Town proposes to make it a working farm, open to the community. There is over 1000 feet of frontage on the river. Matt wondered if there is a role for the PRWC during this period of transition of ownership. It would be a good idea for a land trust (PRLT or Windham Land Trust) to hold the easement. Karen noted that the Town could apply to CBEP for funds to do a legal transfer of the easement or apply for funds to help purchase the property with the condition of the easement going to a land trust.

Karen reported that an electronic version of Appendix B of the Presumpscot River Management Plan is now on the Casco Bay website. Forrest raised the issue of revisiting

the Management Plan so that we don't lose our commitment to implementing the plan. All agreed we are implementing the plan, but that a formal review of the plan in 2009 when the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative funding ends would be a good idea.

Richard noted that Standish has been contacted in conjunction with the Sebago to the Sea initiative. They are putting together a Parks and Recreation Plan, working with Grow Smart Maine, which will use Standish as a model town. He will learn more about this at a meeting tonight.

Matt reported that he, Will and Betty made a presentation to Windham Town Council and provided information about the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative and PRWC. They also plan to go to other towns in the watershed.

Forrest noted that Lois will be likely be assisting with the completion of the River Guide. A map with all the access points on the river will be in the Guide. The map can be scanned and added to the website.

Matt noted that the River Management Society Conference will be in Portland in May. He will do a presentation on the PWI and will lead a field trip. He'd like further discussion of ideas for the field trip in March.

Matt mentioned that the New Meadows Steering Committee has expressed the need for part-time staff, as has the PRWC, and that there may be a way to share a staff position with them.

Will has been in contact with the Northern Forrest Canoe Trail about his idea of creating a spur through the Preumpscot area. They liked the idea of a linkage to the Greater Portland Area and will explore it.

**II. Review Recommended Areas of Focus for 2008** – Will briefly reviewed the PRWC 2008 Areas of Focus (resulting from discussion at the last PRWC meeting and at the Executive Committee meeting held January 15th).

#### Recommended

##### 1 – Presumpscot Watershed Initiative

- Maps for Schools
- YCC
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Other PWI

##### 2- Guide to Presumpscot River

3- USM/PRWC collaboration on monitoring (sediment/toxics) – Note a small group has already met to discuss this project.

4- Mill Brook habitat enhancement/restoration (see the last item in these minutes)

5- Sebago to the Sea conservation initiative

6- Outreach to municipalities – Note that this was an initiative in 2007, was supposed to be linked with town comprehensive planning but didn't move forward. This year it may be recast as a series of presentations to towns/sharing what we do (such as the presentation that Matt, Will and Betty already did in Windham).

7- Community to Save the River campaign (Exec. Comm. plus willing volunteers). Note that the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative project has helped us undertake many great projects. We will need funding to continue these efforts.

#### Worth Considering

8- Milfoil- training for volunteers, monitoring, combating

9 - Riverfest

10-Parson Smith house/farm

Will noted two other ideas that are not on the list and explained why. Reclassification (upgrading) has been spear-headed by FOPR in the past. Due to a lack of capacity, they are not sure that they will take this on in 2008. Proposals are due to DEP by June. The other idea is the Suva site and Geomorphic Assessment, item V. on the agenda, which follows.

#### **V. Suva site and Geomorphic Assessment**

Forrest summarized the issue at the Suva's, landowners at 215 Pope Rd. on the Pleasant River. They have a large failing clay embankment, around 35 feet high by 50 feet wide. Successive storms have led to worsening erosion over the past 3 years, with no assistance offered by NRCS, other than recommendations. The erosion threatens their driveway, a pond and, long-term, Pope Road. The question remains whether the erosion, which is impacting the river and fish habitat according to Curtis Bohlen, is natural or the result of human activities. If induced by human activities at the watershed level, it may make sense to spend public funds to address it. Perhaps a geomorphological study could be used to make a case for FEMA funding. Further discussion is needed to see if PRWC is interested in funding a geomorphological study of the area around the site.

**Update on Mill Brook Project Committee meeting** – Jeff V. provided an update on a meeting recently pulled together by the Casco Bay Habitat Committee. He, Sandra Lary, Matt and others looked at available data/information and opportunities for habitat enhancement and protection in Mill Brook. Francis Brautigan from IF&W attended and expressed his agency's interest. There are some blockages that need to be dealt with and opportunities for land protection efforts. Westbrook owns 1/3 of the Brook. Bob Houston may be able to provide a map of protected areas. There are important cold areas for trout which will be lost if the area is developed and recharge is lost. Jeff has agreed to summarize the studies that have been done in the area and to provide a set of recommendations. He will distribute it for comment.

**Next meeting**

Dates for 2008 meetings are listed at the top of these minutes. The next meeting will be March 27<sup>th</sup> at Gilsland Farm.