

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
March 27, 2008, 2008
3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
@Gilsland Farm, Maine Audubon

2008 Upcoming Meetings of the PRWC Board

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, Bill Hancock- Audubon, Jeff Varricchione-DEP, Merrie Cartwright-NOAA Fisheries, Betty Williams –CCSWCD, Margaret Chabot-Americorps, Mark Aronson –Town of Cumberland Conservation Committee, Bob Wehmeyer – Windham Land Trust and Parsons Smith Project, Kevin McCormack –Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust

I. Introductions - Will led a round of introductions

II. Administration – Karen is leaving the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership and our Treasurer position. Matt Craig has agreed to assume the position of Treasurer. All present agreed to ratify the position.

III. Emerging Projects

River Festival Proposal – Margaret is working on the Riverfest idea. She handed out a draft proposal and gave an overview of her vision. The proposed dates are Saturdays in July or August when Riverbank Park in Westbrook is available. This family-oriented event would start at noon and would include vendors and restaurants selling lunch items and a musical act performing. After lunch, PRWC or FOPR would talk about dam removals, etc. There would be tables from member organizations and others, crafts and activities for children, followed by more music, a guided walk and a raffle. The city's requirements include clean-up by Public Works and a Police Officer on duty during the event. The proposal includes a range of total budget costs from a minimum price of \$2,398.99 for 100 people with no optional items included, up to a maximum of \$5,396.99 for 200 people with all optional items included, i.e., T-Shirts, hats, food, staging.

A lively discussion followed that included suggestions to move the event to the morning to attract more families or to combine the event with Westbrook Together days June 6 -8, since that event attracts a lot of families (although that would lose the focus on the river). Getting people out all along the river instead of just in Westbrook was also suggested. Adding a canoe race was proposed, although we don't know if there is access from the park. A couple of ideas for advertising the event included getting a banner hung over the street and setting up a booth at Westbrook Together Days in June to advertise our own event in July or August. Bob and Bill questioned the cost/benefits of the event since we could get a small turnout. Will suggested we return to the festival discussion after looking at the other areas that need resources.

Clark Farm Preserve – This is a Windham Land Trust project. Bob explained that this 600 acre farm is the largest piece of undeveloped land in Windham (it has a barn and house). The Trust has been attempting to raise \$375,000 for a 75 acre piece of the farm. They raised \$18,000. The Trust for Public Land has since jumped in and we now have \$850,000 committed that needs to be matched. They are submitting a grant application to Land for Maine's Future requesting \$850,000 to permanently conserve the farm. The PRWC has been asked to write a letter to Land for Maine's Future in support of the request for funds. Will handed out a draft letter which does not list the PRWC member organizations but does include a reference to the website where member organizations are listed. The draft letter was OK'd by consensus. Will will submit the letter.

IV. PRWC Areas of Focus for 2008 - Will led a discussion of the PRWC 2008 Areas of Focus (resulting from discussions at the December PRWC meeting and at the Executive Committee meeting held January 15th).

1 – Presumpscot Watershed Initiative

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

Will noted that these events are underway and are continuing for another year.

2- Guide to Presumpscot River

The Guide is nearing completion and has been funded.

3- USM/PRWC collaboration on monitoring

Jeff met with Lucille Benedict from USM. She is interested in doing nutrient monitoring on the river with students. There are QA/QC issues since USM does not have technical practices that are comparable to our EPA/DEP approved QA/QC monitoring plan. It was suggested that we drop this off our list and invite Dr. Benedict to present her findings to us when the USM project is complete.

4- Mill Brook habitat enhancement/restoration

Jeff reported that in January a group of individuals and agencies met to discuss Mill Brook. Considerable funding has already gone into restoring the alewife run. Jeff is close to compiling all the available information on fish passage, sediment inputs and riparian buffers. He has information on the condition of the culverts and the state will be doing fish counts. In 3-4 weeks, Jeff will have the report ready to circulate, including a prioritized list of protection and restoration goals. The idea of focusing on Mill Brook originated in the Casco Bay Habitat Restoration Committee but has generated energy in the PRWC as well.

5- Sebago to the Sea Trail and conservation initiative

PRLT has taken the lead on this effort and \$18,000 has been received so far in grants. This is in the beginning phases with 3-4 meetings so far and a lot of community interest. Will noted that in the coming year there will be a clearer idea of what it will consist of

and who will be involved. There was an article about the initiative in the *Portland Press Herald*. Will said this effort has lots of energy behind it. Richard took the lead on this project and the effort can trace its roots to the PRWC. The effort doesn't need money from PRWC at this point but member group participation would be great.

6- Outreach to municipalities

Matt noted that nothing happened last year on this effort. The original plan was to tie our Plan to the towns' Comprehensive Plans. The idea has evolved this year. Betty, Will and Matt have given presentations to Windham and Gorham on the PRWC and PWI. The goal is to meet with Westbrook, Falmouth and Cumberland this summer. Gorham suggested that we come back and request funding.

7- Community to Save the River campaign

EPA funds will be gone at the end of this year. We should do significant fund-raising to continue PWI projects.

8. River Festival

This was discussed earlier in the agenda.

Narrowing Down the Focus Areas :

Will suggested that we drop #3 from the list. Items #1, 2 and 5 are already underway. Item # 4 is happening already and the members agreed to keep it a priority for PRWC. Item #6 has already started. Will asked if we should continue doing the municipal outreach. There was a unanimous Yes. For #7, Will reviewed the concept of the **Community to Save the River** campaign, a regional, watershed-based approach to fundraising that would bring together the river's stakeholders to share costs. Matt noted that he may be able to function as a staff person for the PRWC and could help support the campaign. He noted that we have \$6500 in the next CBEP budget but we should continue to look for federal funds. Will and the group estimated that we need \$60,000-65,000 to continue the YCC, water quality monitoring, education, and administrative costs (website, etc). After discussion, the Executive Committee was authorized "to seek funds to continue these four activities and to support the seeking of funds." Betty noted that CCSWCD is already looking at education grants for the school projects and 319 for YCC activities. Will suggested that Bill come to an Executive Committee meeting to assist us with fundraising discussions and related issues about organizational structure. Ideas discussed included using another 501(c)3 as a pass-through for funds.

Returning to the River Festival, Will noted that we have a proposal and a committed individual who wants to plan the event. Matt suggested that Margaret take advantage of groups who have successfully done river festivals in the past (River Network, Exeter River in NH). Margaret noted that she has experience planning such events. After further discussion member by member, Bill still had concerns but we reached consensus to proceed with the event. Margaret was asked to keep the budget as low as possible. She passed around a sign-up sheet for sub-committees to assist her.

Other areas to consider

Milfoil- training for volunteers –Will suggested we put off this discussion.

Parsons-Smith house/farm –While covenants exist already to protect the land from development, there is a need to put a conservation easement on the land. Bob noted that the property consists of 160 acres and that he is on an official Windham town committee that expects to follow through on the issue to completion. Will noted that it is not really a PRWC issue but we should keep an eye on it.

River Reclassification

Reclassification (upgrading) has been spear-headed by FOPR in the past. Due to a lack of capacity, they will not take this on in 2008. A filing for reclassification would have to go to DEP by June. The new sewage connector will eliminate 2 pollution sources and all effluent will go to Westbrook. From Cumberland Mills Dam to Sebago Lake the only point source will be the Windham School system discharge into the Pleasant River. An upgrade is warranted from C to B for the lower river below Cumberland Mills Dam. DEP has about a 5-year cycle so there will not be another chance to file for several years.

V. Open Forum

While there wasn't time for a full open forum, two items came up during the meeting that are appropriately listed here:

Audubon Canoe Trip

Bill noted that on Monday June 9th there will be an Audubon Canoe Trip on the river from 4 to 8 PM. He would be willing to make us a part of the event. Will expressed the group's thanks for a great opportunity.

River Management Society Field Trip

Matt noted that he needs help planning for a field trip for the River Management Society's Conference (May 12 – 15). He will be giving a ½ hour presentation. He has been asked to set up an all-day paddling field trip for 20 people with speakers at sites visited. Betty, Will and Jeff agreed to help.

The next meeting will take place on May 22nd, 2008, at Gilsland Farm.