

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2008

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

@ CCSWCD, South Windham

Next PRWC Meeting: December 4, 2008

3-5 pm at

USM Wishcamper Center, 34 Bedford
Street, Portland (home of CBEP)

In attendance: Diane Gould-EPA, Matt Craig- CBEP, Will Plumley- FOPR, Jeff Varricchione-DEP, Margaret Chabot-AmeriCorps, Nikkilee Carleton - USM/PRWC intern, Andy Colvin – Maine Audubon, Richard Curtis - PRLT, Molly Just – Westbrook, Jessica Burton – Portland North Land Trust Collaborative, Brooks More – Windham, Betty Williams – CCSWCD, Cathy Ramsdell – FOCB, Kerry McCormack – Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust, Forrest Bell – PRW, Roger Berle – Portland Trails

Will opened the meeting with introductions. He formally thanked Margaret Chabot for her leadership and initiative with the River Fest event. He presented Margaret with a framed photograph of a baby snapping turtle from the Presumpscot River. The photo was passed around the room so the group could sign the back. Will noted that Margaret's poise and management skills made the event possible. He also thanked Lee Carleton for her role as co-coordinator for the River Fest and mentioned that she is delivering her final report on the event today. A gift from the PRWC for Lee is on the way.

1. Updates

Fish passage at Cumberland Mills - Will reported that the IF&W hearing on fish passage at Cumberland Mills will likely be held in December before Christmas. The groups involved in the dam removal agreement are still at the table (SAPPI, American Rivers, FOPR, USF&W, DMR). Will offered to notify the group of the date and location.

EPA Study of Total Maximum Daily Loads for the Presumpscot – Diane noted that a TMDL defines the assimilative capacity of a water body, in this case the Presumpscot River, i.e. what the flow rate and discharge limits need to be for the river to meet Maine's clean water standards and sustain fish and other aquatic life.

A TMDL was developed in November 1998 for the Class C 6.5 mile segment of the Presumpscot extending upriver from the Presumpscot Falls at tidewater to the SAPPI mill. This was based on modeling which took into consideration pollutant inputs, water quality and the flows needed to maintain water quality during warm weather. Since that time, major changes have occurred: the 2002 removal of Smelt Hill Dam and the 1999 cessation of the SAPPI pulping operation. Spurred on by requests from Roger Wheeler of the Friends of Sebago Lake (whose primary interest is in regulating Sebago lake levels), the DEP and EPA, in partnership with USGS, agreed to conduct a dye study, water quality sampling and flow measurements in that segment of the Presumpscot. The

goals were 1) to document the existing water quality and trophic state of the river and its effect on dissolved oxygen, and 2) to determine minimum river flows and allowable pollutant loads while maintaining water quality goals. In order to achieve low flow regime required for the study, SAPPI was asked to regulate the river flow at 250 cubic feet per second (from Eel Weir Dam) from Friday evening to Thursday afternoon.

DEP water quality sampling was done at 12 locations starting above the confluence with the Pleasant River and included the two point source discharges (SAPPI and Westbrook sewage treatment plant). Parameters sampled included temperature, DO, N and P, chlorophyll a and biological oxygen demand. The EPA dye study conducted at the same time consisted of introducing rhodamine dye in the vicinity of the River Meadow Golf Club and measuring its rate of dispersal to the tidal waters in Portland. U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) simultaneously conducted flow measurements at 4 stations along the River. DEP will use all of this data to model the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or pollutant assimilative capacity of the river and to determine what flows are required to be passed from Sebago Lake during warm weather. The results of the model will be used to determine Sebago Lake levels and allowable flow rates in the River.

In addition to the TMDL-related sampling, Barry Mower from DEP used the opportunity to collect additional Presumpscot fish samples in gill nets for blood and tissue analysis. Smallmouth bass collected will be tested for the presence of dioxin, a contaminant linked to historic paper mill discharges. White suckers, fatty bottom-feeding fish, will be tested for the presence of endocrine disrupters, a family of compounds that is showing up in some urban waterways and fish because of the widespread use and improper disposal of pharmaceuticals.

2. Land Conservation

Portland North Regional Conservation Plan— Jessica Burton is the administrator for the Portland North Land Trust Collaborative, which is made up of three land trusts. They are the Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay, the Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust, and the Falmouth Land Trust. The collaborative builds administrative efficiencies and encourages regional conservation thinking, education and environmental awareness. They are now focusing on the islands, Falmouth and Cumberland. This fall, they are pulling together relevant GIS layers (e.g., agricultural land, undeveloped land, recreation, water access, working land). They are using Beginning with Habitat and town information. They will use these GIS maps over the winter to create actions plans for the land and the islands.

PRWC members were asked about how their groups are collaborating with land trusts. Matt noted the availability of the CBEP Habitat Protection fund and the fact the Curtis Bohlen sees collaboration as the wave of the future. Matt stressed the importance of being intentional about protecting resources. Cathy noted FOCB's Bayscaping program and nitrogen pollution reduction efforts. They have worked with Harpswell Land Trust. FOCB is interested in PNLTC's ideas about changing home and business practices. The discussion turned to impervious surface. Cathy noted that Portland is looking at a

stormwater utility. Matt noted that PWI has developed impervious coverage for the Presumpscot watershed. Will noted the need to bring all the data together. He mentioned the Cap and Trade effort as a model. Will suggested adding this issue to the December agenda.

Presumpscot Mgt Plan and Role of PRWC- Will noted that we need a more systematic analysis of open space issues. The three next steps for us are:

- expand our focus beyond the 250 foot riparian zone
- update and add detail to the natural resource analysis started by PNLTC
- analyze and set priorities for recreation (e.g., Sebago to the Sea)

Will suggested adding this to the December agenda. Should we focus on land conservation next year? Forrest noted that the PRWC could provide motivational prompts and monitor successes. Jeff suggested using a “thermometer” to identify benchmark goals and track them publicly. Example goals offered by the group were acres of riparian zone protected by 2010, impervious surface goal, promoting use of LID to reduce effective impervious surface. The Wishcamper center has many good examples of LID.

3. Mill Brook Restoration

Jeff did a powerpoint presentation on his May, 08 draft report *Recommendations for Future Restoration and Management Efforts for Mill Brook, Westbrook, Maine*, prepared for the CBEP Habitat Restoration Committee. The report built on information and data provided at a meeting held January 23rd which involved Francis Brautigam, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW), Don Card, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Matt Craig, CBEP and PRWC, Jon Kachmar, Maine State Planning Office / Gulf of Maine Council, Marcy Scott, NOAA / National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeff Varricchione & Margaret Chabot, DEP and Jed Wright, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Gulf of Maine Program. Others who contributed to the document include Forrest Bell and Fred Dillon, PRW and FB Environmental, Sandra Lary, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Gulf of Maine Program and Gail Wippelhauser Maine Department of Marine Resources. An overview of the recommendations in the document is as follows:

- 1, Preserve lands adjacent to Mill Brook and throughout its watershed.
2. Reduce pollution impacts and promote healthy riparian buffers in the Mill Brook watershed.
3. Protect or restore stream continuity from Highland lake to the Presumpscot River for the benefit of migrating fisheries and wildlife.
4. Inventory the distribution and abundance of large wood in Mill Brook; Augment supplies of large wood if their current distribution and abundance are considered to be inadequate.
5. Coordinate efforts in this watershed with recommended courses of action described in Management Plans.

Jeff noted that while there are a few DO and bacterial issues, Mill Brook is largely undeveloped (there is a 3 mile section of forested land) and could be in great condition without major effort. He envisions a task force to work on the problems in Mill Brook. Forrest noted that the landowners were notified via a mailing when he did the watershed survey. It was agreed that meeting with Molly is important to keep Westbrook informed.

There is ATV damage and it will be important to work with ATV clubs on erosion issues. Jeff has spoken to CMP about replanting along power line cuts. Betty noted the need to talk more with Molly about shoreland zoning. Richard noted landowners can donate easements.

4. Open Forum

Milfoil-Forrest reported that the milfoil training took place a month or so ago and that 3 Presumpscot volunteers attended. PRW does not have enough resources to do the needed survey work. Lee suggested Waynfleet School children could get involved. Matt volunteered diving services. Betty noted that USM students might be better than High School students. Perhaps the YCCs could get involved or Lakes Environmental Association.

Kayaking the Presumpscot-Will shared a story he was told about kayaking the river at night above Saccarappa and feeling like floating in space.

Lee's Report on the River Fest-Lee's report is on disk. She noted how much she enjoyed hearing why the members are part of the PRWC. Matt noted that 240 hours of match to the PWI grant are coming from Lee's time – over \$5,000.

Falmouth Town Council Presentation-Betty noted the presentation has been moved to October 27th.

Green Expo-Matt will have a PWI booth at the Green Expo at Falmouth High School.

Bird Walk-Andy noted there is a two-hour bird walk along the Presumpscot all year long on Thursdays starting at 7 AM.

FOCB-Cathy invited everyone to the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival on October 4th at the Abromson Center at USM. Plan to come at 4:50 PM. Cost is \$15.00. Also, FOCB's Annual Meeting is October 29th. It will include volunteer awards and the Friend of Casco Bay award.

Treasurer-Matt noted that PRWC has money (around \$7,000) and we should consider how to spend it. It was agreed by consensus to let the Executive Committee decide.

Web Page-Matt suggested members visit the web page and see the calendar page.

Meeting Adjourned/ Next meeting-The next meeting will take place on December 4th, 2008 at the USM Wishcamper Center, 34 Bedford Street, Portland (the new home of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership).