

2009 Upcoming Meetings of the PRWC Board

March 26, 2009 Gilsland Farm, Falmouth
May 28, 2009 Location TBD

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
February 9, 2009
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
@Maine Audubon Gilsland Farm Sanctuary,
Falmouth, ME

In attendance: Diane Gould-EPA, Matt Craig - CBEP, Will Plumley - FOPR, Jeff Varricchione - DEP, Michelle Windsor-Americorps, Andy Colvin – Maine Audubon, Richard Curtis - PRLT, Lisa Vickers - DEP, Merrie Cartwright - NOAA Fisheries, Diane Gould – EPA, Peter Milholland – FOCB, Forrest bell – PRLT, Bob Shafto – Town of Falmouth, Nan Cumming – Portland Trails, Jessica Burton – PNLTC, Tania Neuschafer - PRLT

Introductions: Will led a round of introductions.

IF & W Process for Fish Passage: The Cumberland Mills Dam hearing took place in December. Most of the testimony was in favor of fish passage. SAPPI and the intervenors are allowed to file final briefs. A decision is expected in late spring/early summer. If fish passage is ordered, Phase II hearings will be held to determine what kind of passage should be installed.

Water Quality Monitoring - Data Sondes : Year 3 of the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative has concluded. At the last Executive Committee meeting, the continued use of the sondes was discussed. The group agreed it was time to look ahead to upgrading the lower part of the river from Class C to Class B. The FOPR had tried to get the upgrade in the past but the recommendation didn't make it into DEP's package to the Board. Karen Wilson, USM Gorham Professor of Environmental Science and Policy had been invited to attend. Karen took over the position formerly filled by Merrie. She was looking for school year and summer intern projects for her students. The Executive Committee agreed that her students can help us by researching the DEP's needs and process and what additional data will be needed. Potentially the students could assist with sonde maintenance and work with the data.

Will asked the Steering Committee if they had any thoughts on priorities or pitfalls. Peter noted that the Presumpscot Estuary (defined as the falls to Martins Pt. Bridge and the southern tip of Mackworth Island) is classed as SC. FOCB would like to see this saltwater portion of the Presumpscot upgraded to SB, moving the SC line over to the Portland side of Martin's Point Bridge, which would leave Portland harbor and Back Cove as SC. Water quality indicates it could be upgraded. The DEP decision whether to upgrade (to a higher level of protection) is based on evidence that the water body meets or could meet standards. Will indicated that we have 2 -3 years to prepare our submission. Forrest noted that we are missing bacteria data. We have East End Beach data and DMR should have some bacterial data for the estuarine part. The group agreed to pursue a two-pronged request for upgrade – the lower river and the estuarine portion. The students will be asked to research where the lines are (now that the dam has been

removed) for the riverine class C and estuarine SC portions of the Presumpscot. Merrie, Will and Peter will take the lead on this project. Jeff noted that keeping Dave Courtemanch at DEP informed and showing him any study plan is a good idea.

Set PRWC Projects for 2009 – Will noted that 4 projects have already been approved:

- Guide to the Presumpscot River – Forrest/Matt will lead this effort
- Sebago-to-the-Sea Trail – Richard will lead this effort
- PRWC brochure
- Reclassify lower Presumpscot from C to B and estuary from SC to SB – As just discussed, Merrie, Will and Peter will work with Karen’s students.

In addition, the Executive Committee reviewed the December Steering Committee brainstorming and agreed to recommend three projects:

1. Establish Land Conservation Vision, Values & Priorities for the watershed

Discussion: Will indicated that all of the land trusts participate in the coalition and that we are in a position to agree on regional values and priorities. Identifying individual parcels was seen as touchy but that by agreeing on values, we could go public. It was suggested that we could create a common vision that could be used throughout the watershed. We could work together to develop a consistent approach, identifying a list of lands to conserve and helping to find the right organization to work on preservation. We can build on the vision in the Plan.

Next Steps: We want to have a Land Conservation Vision and Values discussion. Rather than setting up a subcommittee, the group agreed to use the next Steering Committee meeting to have this discussion. Will suggested that we piggyback on the Maine Land Trust Network Casco Bay Regional meeting on March 26th. We will meet from 3 to 4:30 and devote the entire time to this topic. The Land Trust Network will then meet from 4:30 to 6:30.

2. Participate in Public Events (in lieu of River Festival)

Discussion: the Executive Committee recommended that we not do a Riverfest event this year but look for events in which to have a presence.

Next Steps: Several events are possibilities for a PRWC presence, including Windham Summer Fest (June 20th), the Clam Festival, the Children’s Water Festival and Westbrook Together days in early June. Several members agreed to participate in a publicity and press relations-focused committee that would include looking at events like these. Andy, Jeff, Michelle will participate. Diane also agreed to participate and Merrie agreed she may be able to represent PRWC at some events. Matt noted that he has the display which needs updating and offered to have Greg Williams, who works with CBEP, meet with the committee. It was agreed that it makes sense to have this same committee work on the PRWC brochure. Andy will set up a meeting to strategize.

3. Mill Brook habitat enhancement/restoration

Discussion: Jeff noted that some riparian erosion sites previously noted in his Mill Brook habitat report have since been healed over due to the new law that keeps ATVs out of flowing streams. Land conservation is now the top priority. Mill Brook land

conservation should be folded into the Land Conservation task above. A few culverts could be more fish friendly. Matt noted that they had used the fish passage protocol on 3 culverts and some sites had issues. Jeff noted we should queue up these projects so we will be ready if money is available. Matt suggested we could develop a land conservation initiative around Mill Brook and approach PRLT and the City of Westbrook.

Next Steps: Matt and Jeff will continue to look for opportunities to work on Mill Brook.

Other possible projects:

Biota Tracking/Bioblitz –It was suggested that the new publicity committee think about this option.

YCC – Betty had championed this idea. Matt noted that lack of money is the real issue. The region is shrinking to one YCC.

Open Forum:

Andy reported that Audubon will have an outreach person available for the next few months to give presentations on Road Ecology to towns. He will forward a link to more information in the Audubon newsletter to the PRWC members. If interested, he could help line up a presentation.

Matt reported that the PWI webpage will soon have a new dimension – a GIS interactive map with data and graphs. The link will be sent out soon.

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Meeting Adjourned/ Next meeting-The next meeting will take place at Gilsland Farm in Falmouth on March 26th from 3:00 – 4:30 PM (followed by the Maine Land Trust Network Casco Bay Regional Meeting 4:30 – 6:00 PM)