

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
September 24, 2009
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
@USM Wishcamper Center, Room 327

2009 Upcoming Meetings of the PRWC Board

December 3, 2009 Location TBD

In attendance: Matt Craig - CBEP, Will Plumley - FOPR, Jeff Varricchione - DEP, Fred Dillon-PRW, Betty Williams - CCSWCD, Diane Gould – EPA, Richard Curtis – PRLT, John MacKinnon – Windham Town Council, Bob Shafto – Town of Falmouth, Heather True – CCSWCD, Francis Brautigam – MDIFW, Curtis Bohlen - CBEP

1. Introductions and Purpose of the Meeting: Will led a round of introductions and reviewed the agenda.

2. Briefing on Fish Assemblage Study Report – Matt gave a powerpoint presentation on the fish assemblage study conducted in 2006 and 2007 in the Presumpscot River. The project was led by Chris Yoder of Midwest Biodiversity Institute in Ohio. CBEP and PRWC jointly provided partial funding for the work. The purpose of the study was to assess the current status of the fish assemblages as it is related to both historical and contemporary biological, chemical, and physical characteristics and stressors. The interim Maine Rivers IBI (index of biological diversity) developed by Chris Yoder was used as one of the key analytical methods to assess the condition of the current fish assemblage.

A map displayed the sampling locations along the mainstem and in the Pleasant, Little and Piscataqua Rivers. There were 22 samples taken in total, using low level stun electrofishing. The 2007 samples focused on anadromous fish. A total of 28 species were identified, of which 23 were native and 5 non-native. Eels were the most numerous (a slide showed how easily elvers can scale dams and vertical surfaces). The median number of species was 7 per site (4 – 15). The tributaries had more fish than the mainstem. One concern was the abundance of smallmouth bass (the 3rd most abundant species). As climate change leads to warmer temperatures, smallmouth bass may increase, outcompeting brook trout. Notably, an Atlantic sturgeon and a shortnose sturgeon were caught below Presumpscot Falls. Golden shiner, a pollution tolerant species, was common in the impoundments.

The Biological Condition Gradient, a conceptual model of condition and related assemblages, showed that the Presumpscot is not quite meeting minimal standards. Based on the IBI, the Presumpscot rated 3rd from last compared to a list of other Maine Rivers. In general, rivers with more human impacts had poorer IBI scores.

The report concluded that:

-  Assemblages reflect the presence of dams
-  A few sites met Tier IV (the minimum goal of the Clean Water Act)
-  There are anadromous fish present in the lower 7-8 miles of the mainstem
-  Localized areas of impact need a stressor diagnosis performed
-  Intensity of hydromodification overwhelms the riverine characteristics

The report is available on the CBEP website at:

[http://www.cascobay.usm.maine.edu/pdfs/presumpscot%20 final revised report 20090731.pdf](http://www.cascobay.usm.maine.edu/pdfs/presumpscot%20final%20revised%20report%2020090731.pdf)

Matt is developing a Fact Sheet.

3. Pleasant River – Discussion of Recent Changes Observed in Windham -Will distributed an e-mail sent by Ethan Nadeau, a contractor for MIF&W, to Beth Swartz, MIF&W, summarizing observations on the condition of the Pleasant River upstream of Falmouth Road to Brand Knight Road. He observed actively eroding banks, failing root systems and large amounts of woody debris. He noted that brook floaters, a freshwater mussel that has been identified as a threatened species, were abundant in earlier surveys (2001) but were now scarce and felt that sedimentation was responsible. Francis Brautigam noted that siltation and sedimentation issues were likely the result of changes in land use from agricultural to residential. Brook floaters are an important water quality index species, requiring high quality water.

Jeff gave a slide presentation overview of the Pleasant River based on a recent wadeable stream rapid reconnaissance survey he led with FB Environmental and CCSWCD (not including the portion of the river that Ethan Nadeau looked at). The report is due out in 2 – 3 weeks. Fred noted that he has a prioritized map of non-point source sites. Heather mentioned the Pleasant River 2008 s.319 watershed survey. A FB Environmental hotspot survey identified 3 hotspot areas.

The group discussed next steps/ways we can help. Heather suggested water quality sampling to see if that is an issue impacting floaters. Francis said IF&W will be trying to nail down the issues further. Curtis noted that floaters are a fascinating species, hitching a ride in the gills of fish moving upstream as a way to disperse their young. Heather noted that the district will apply for s.319 funding in 2010 for the Pleasant R. No other obvious sources of funding were apparent. Curtis suggested CBEP Habitat Restoration money could be used for a clearly defined project. Matt noted the need to look for sedimentation sources, data on locations where floaters were, where there are farms. Perhaps using students, we could get data on soil loss, use GPS to identify key locations. Will and others agreed that with more information on soil loss, the key role of floaters, and non-profit support, we could make a strong case for funding. Heather should do outreach to the farmers as a first step. Fred would be willing to do some outreach working with CCSWCD. The Trout Unlimited Embrace a Stream Grant is a possibility for funding.

4. Project Updates

 River Reclassification – The contract is now in place with FB Environmental and the Quality Assurance Project Plan is under development. Will P. will write to Dave Courtemanch at DEP to make sure the agency will follow through on a commitment to do invertebrate sampling in the Presumpscot in 2010.

 Land Conservation Vision, Values, Priorities –Curtis reported that CBEP has a \$35,000 grant from Environmental Finders Network to pull together a cooperative vision of land conservation values in the lower Presumpscot watershed. We need to pull together the Land Trusts and the towns. Windham is already involved (through Brooks More) and we need to get more towns on board.

 Marketing – Thanks to Andy Colvin and others, the goals for this year have been met (brochure, outreach at events). Andy is now working in Chellie Pingree's office.

 Sebago to the Sea – The first public meeting was held in Standish. Richard and Will attended. It was a great experience, with much enthusiasm for the project and even requests to expand it. Westbrook and Falmouth meetings will be held in the fall – see sebagotothesea.org for dates and locations.

5. August Paddle- Richard, Diane, and Matt all paddled from Shaw Park in Gorham up to the base of Dundee Dam. The river was beautiful! Hopefully more people will participate next summer.

Meeting Adjourned/Next meeting-The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM . The next PRWC meeting will be December 3, 2009, 3 – 5 PM, location TBD.