

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
January 28, 2010
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
@CCSWCD, Windham, ME

Next PRWC Meeting

March 25 – Working meeting on River/Estuary Reclassification project – all are invited to attend.

In attendance: Matt Craig - CBEP, Will Plumley - FOPR, Jeff Varricchione - DEP, Diane Gould – EPA, Betty Williams, CCSWCD, Cindy Montanez - Americorps, Merrie Cartwright – NOAA Fisheries

1. Introductions: Will led a round of introductions for DEP’s new Americorps volunteer, Cindy Montanez. Due to the small turnout, Will polled the group and we agreed to skip Item 2 (Project Updates) and use the time to address the “PRWC Check-In” questions.

2. PRWC at 5 Years Old. Self Improvement Check-In: Will noted that the PRWC’s plate is full, with multiple ongoing projects but that attendance is diminishing. Many long-term members may not be finding it valuable to attend or are too busy. We need to ask where we are and how we are providing value. The group agreed that the Executive Committee is functioning well and that PRWC is perceived as a “one-stop shop” for issues related to the Presumpscot. Will facilitated a brainstorming discussion in response to a series of questions, using flip charts to capture bulleted ideas.

What have we accomplished? (top-of-mind – not exhaustive)

- Stabilized 47 stream crossings (one of many accomplishments of the PWI project)
- Implemented the Management Plan
- Fish Assemblage study
- Engaged in regional land conservation
- Signage project
- Educational outreach:
 - Festival, other events
 - Brochure
 - Town Council presentations
- Elevated visibility of group and partners as stewards, good people to work with.
- Gravel pit study
- Website
- Five-year history of consensus decision-making. We have never needed to vote.
- Relationships built, networking, fostering collaboration.
- Good network for building relationships
- Spawned ideas that have been transferred to other projects/groups, e.g., Spruce Creek in Kittery used our report on how to do a Riverfest; Jamie has presented nationally about Yardscaping (part of PWI)

How is PRWC valuable to you and your organization and how can we be of greater value to each other?

Helped us build relationships with more partners
Networking
PWI was huge for us. It allowed me to work with my favorite things (erosion, etc.) and also got me on the farms where I learned a lot.
Personal growth.
Synergy (not just me!)
Provides funding – funders like regional partnerships.
Whole is greater than parts – synergy.
Fulfills my agency’s mission for Estuary Projects to have a watershed component
Satisfying
Shared vision and work together
Grant to work together
Different perspectives work together
Coalition serves as an advisory committee for Casco Bay Estuary Partnership funds
Identify ways to work on local scales
Work on watershed to improve Casco Bay
Great model to translate to other committees and projects – model good process
Will is a great asset – a volunteer not constrained by an organization – beholden to no one!
Focus areas approach gives us the ability to focus on many areas
Allows me to give back and give back locally. Allows me to bring back information for my agency’s regional newsletter.

What can the coalition do to bring more value to members?

Do an e-mail survey/doodle poll/Survey Monkey with multiple choices asking what we can do to bring more value, e.g.:
Networking
Collaboration
Funding
Cookies...,etc.
Create a Yahoo group, an interactive on-line space with a list-serve.
Fewer meetings?
Work ideas out without a face-to-face meeting.
Quarterly meetings might attract more people.
Meetings should have more urgency and be meatier.
Agendas more focused on urgent issues/decision making.
Consistent, predictable funding opportunities, e.g., regular RFP for a few thousand dollars/year
Become more approachable for outside projects
Be intentional about how we use the money.
Build on the PWI

Do more:

Actively manage our money

What are our SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Weaknesses

Weaknesses

Low attendance
Everyone is a volunteer
No compensation for coming to meetings
Affiliation with USM has some constraints
PRWC is not an incorporated entity
Membership is unclear at this point

Threats

Funding dries up
Members too busy, with higher priorities (their funding may be at issue, reduced staff)

Strengths

Affiliation with USM (e.g., liability insurance)

Discussion: It was suggested that we use our regular meeting times for topical/working meetings. It was agreed that we should devote the March meeting to one of our projects, May to another. Sebago to the Sea is making great progress with people on staff. It is in great shape. The land conservation project is in pretty good shape with Matt “riding herd” on the project. It is a more complex collaboration than Sebago to the Sea. The Water Quality Reclassification project has no team and no funding other than existing PRWC funds. It is making progress (QAPP under development, Matt has been taking the lead). We need to make sure that DEP does the macroinvertebrate sampling this year. Karen Wilson wants to be on the team. So far, the Executive Committee has served as the team. We should focus the March meeting on this project.

The purpose of the March meeting should be to get a clear sense of team roles for the Water Quality Reclassification project. Perhaps Curtis and CBEP could take the lead on the sondes, making sure the data are collected and reliable. PRWC can 1.) make sure that DEP is getting samples, 2.) help select sites, and 3.) advocate for reclassification. A question was raised about DEP and “aspirational” reclassification. Jeff noted that DEP will require extensive weight of evidence that the water body will meet classification. Will suggested asking Landis Hudson from Maine Rivers to come to the March meeting.

The next meeting will be March 25th, location to be announced.