2011 Upcoming PRWC Meetings

Not yet scheduled

Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
June 30, 2011
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
@USM, Muskie School Room 211

In attendance: Matt Craig - CBEP, Will Plumley - FOPR, Diane Gould – EPA, Betty Williams, CCSWCD, Merrie Cartwright – NOAA Fisheries, Don Kale - DEP, Vanessa Levesque – Land Conservation, Vision and Priorities Project Coordinator, Rachel Bouvier – FOPR/USM, Cathy Ramsdell -FOCB, Tania Neuschaefer – PRLT and Sebago to the Sea Project, Brad Goulet – SAPPI, Peter Newkirk – DEP, Roger Wheeler – Friends of Sebago Lake, Michael Shaughnessy – FOPR, Landis Hudson – Maine Rivers, Richard Curtis – PRLT, Paul Hunt – PWD, Mitch Mason – U Maine Cooperative Extension, Fred Dillon – PRW, Cayce Dalton and Forrest Bell – FB Environmental

1. Introductions: Will led a round of introductions. He noted that Diane Gould, who has worked on Presumpscot issues for 12 years, is retiring and that Matt Liebman from EPA will be working with PRWC. Betty Williams will act as Secretary of PRWC after Diane leaves.

2. Sebago to the Sea Trail: Tania discussed the project using maps located at the project website SebagototheSea.org. She briefly reviewed the history of the project from an idea formed within the PRWC. The project received funding in 2007 and the project team (including PRLT, Portland Trails, Portland, and Westbrook) has been meeting regularly towards achieving their goal of 28 miles of recreational trail from the Lake to Casco Bay by 2012. The first three sections (8 miles) was designated in 2010. The first section (Sebago Lake to Rt. 237) is on Portland Water District (PWD) land, managed by PRLT. The next section (Rt. 237 to Otter Ponds) is also on PWD land, managed by PRLT. Section 3 (Otter Ponds to Rt. 202) is a paved trail that follows the Mountain Division rail corridor, owned by DOT and managed by the Towns of Gorham and Windham. Another 11.25 miles of the trail will be designated in 2011. From Rt. 202 the trail will continue to follow the Mountain Division corridor rail bed for 5 miles into Westbrook. However, we will have to wait for completion of the rails, which are being re-installed this year, then build the trail. Windham and Westbrook recently received a $150,000 grant for trail design. Meanwhile, a "paddle trail" on the Presumpscot River from Mallison Falls to Lincoln Street in Westbrook will allow trail users to get to Westbrook. From there, the trail proceeds to Riverton Trolley Park, then Portland Trails will continue the trail to Riverside Drive, through the woods and along the river. Trail managers for each section will maintain the trail into the future even if the Sebago to the Sea group dissolves.

3. **Land Conservation, Vision, Values and Priorities:** Matt noted that this project started 2 years ago as a way to expand the original land conservation vision in the *Plan for the Presumspcot* (which focused on the river main stem) to include river watershed. Funding was obtained through the Environmental Funders Network: Quality of Place grants. Recently. Vanessa Levesque was hired to coordinate the project. She was

formerly the Brunswick Natural Resources Planner, chaired the New Meadows Watershed Project Steering Committee and is now working on a PhD in Sustainable Solutions at UMO.

Vanessa noted that the project originally had a steering committee and held broad stakeholder meetings which provided valuable input but began to lose the regional focus. The project approach has now been narrowed and will emphasize working with the first tier stakeholders (land trusts) and towns that conserve land (Falmouth and Portland). The second tier will be other towns and non-profits. Finally, the third tier will be businesses, recreational users and the public. Matt, Vanessa and Stephen Engel (Maine Community Center for GIS) are steering the project now. On Monday, the project met with Board members of most of the regional land trusts, and with Falmouth and Portland. Participants looked at a set of values projected on maps provided by MCCGIS, and discussed rankings and what it would mean to have a regional vision. The team will be working to involve the two land trusts whose Boards were not represented at the meeting (Cumberland and Chebeague Land Trust and Windham Land Trust).

Will noted what a great asset Vanessa has been and how spectacular the new GIS maps are. They will be posted on the PRWC website.

4. River Water Quality Monitoring and Reclassification: Will noted that this project is being run by the Executive Committee and is focused on upgrading the classification of lower river from C to B. Multiple data sondes have been deployed at critical points in the lower river. Good water quality will be important for the sea run fish that will be coming up the river as new fish passage is added by SAPPI. FOCB is undertaking a parallel effort to upgrade part of the estuary from SC to SB.

a. 2010 river water quality data: Cayce noted that the region to be upgraded is downstream of the mixing zone of the lowest dam on the river. FB Environmental monitored dissolved oxygen during multiple deployments at two sites in the lower Presumpscot between Cumberland Mills Dam and head of tide (near the 302 bridge and the Turnpike/Falmouth Spur) during the late July to early October timeframe in 2010. For monitoring, a sonde was placed in a weighted lobster cage near the bottom. During deployments, DO was measured every 15 minutes along with temperature, specific conductivity and approximate depth. Over 6,700 readings taken at temperatures from 26 degrees to 14.5 degrees C with only 1 sample falling below 7 mg/L DO. Both DO and per cent saturation measured well above water quality standards values. The big picture is that the stream doesn't appear to have DO problems. Cayce expects to repeat the monitoring this summer but only has 2 sondes to work with so a day of data will be lost.

b. New DEP river model: Peter noted that Paul Mitnik did water quality modeling work in the 90s. Don Alpert sampled in 2003 and 2004 for low flow and ambient water quality. The question is what affect the removal of the pulping operation and Smelt Hill Dam has had. Samples have been taken along the river and at sites at SAPPI and Westbrook. A modeling approach is needed because you can't monitor under all conditions and the model helps us to look at "what if" and worst case scenarios. The model used a 7Q10 of

300 cfs, temperature of 26 degrees C and maximum licensed loads from Westbrook POTW and SAPPI (actual loads are much lower). Using the licensed loads, the DO drops below 7 mg/L at the worst case scenario. But, he noted that the proposal to be discussed later in this meeting would increase summer flows in the river and could be encouraging. He will have a report on recalibrating the model available for comment by mid-July.

c. FOCB upgrade of the estuary: Cathy noted that FOCB would like to see a section at the mouth of the river upgraded from SC to SB. Historically, the DO saturation is above 96%. The question is bacteria. DEP is looking at bacterial data and will report to FOCB how much bacterial data is needed for the potential upgrade. Kathy encouraged the group to take advantage of the opportunity to work with DEP during period every 3-4 years when they look for reclassification opportunities.

Q & A: Fred asked Peter how bacteria affect reclassification. Peter noted that there are CSOs at Westbrook and much impervious surface. He noted also that Leon Tsomides looked at the macroinvertebrates in the lower river in 2010 and they did not meet class B. Forrest noted that PRW has collected bacterial data. It is key for our reclassification effort to understand how bacterial numbers affect reclassification. Peter noted we should get Susan Davies and Dave Courtemanch to work with us. Matt asked where the rock bags were deployed for macroinvertebrate sampling. Peter confirmed they were in the lower river. Kathy asked about the Westbrook CSO program. Paul offered to find out. FOCB will also look at that issue.
***__It was noted this could be an agenda item for the next meeting__**
Fred pointed out that the macroinvertebrate problem could be a "show stopper." Peter said that the SOD (sediment oxygen demand) is decreasing and as the river continues to clean out, the bugs should return. Merrie asked about reclassifying just a portion of the lower river. Peter suggested starting the conversation with DEP. Matt raised the question whether we should do more DO sampling this summer given the bug issue. Is there a better place to deploy the sondes, asking a different question? Peter noted that the DO data are useful to DEP for the modeling effort. Merrie noted the funds could be used for more bug sampling. It was agreed more discussion is needed. **[The Executive Committee will discuss this further}.**

5. Sebago Lake Level Management: Brad noted that changes have been proposed to FERC and that there is an open comment period. The idea originally came from a study SAPPI did to maximize megawatts from the hydro power at Eel Weir. The existing Lake Level Management Plan was thought untouchable but SAPPI learned that there was considerable public interest in changing the plan in a way that would also improve efficiency for the turbines. The new proposal would lower the lake in the summer (which are currently maintained at a high water level) and even out the flows, increasing overall minimum flows. In opposition to this proposal are the marina owners/boaters who feel that lowering lake levels in the summer would threaten the recreational boating industry on the lake.

Roger noted that FOSL wants more natural lake levels, which are better for the lake and the environment. Marina owners can dredge or create deeper launches. The lake needs wetlands, less erosion.

Will asked what the impact to the river would be. Brad noted that increased minimum flows will improve water quality in the river, improve habitat in the bypass reaches, enhance the fish passage effort (an ongoing $6 million investment). Roger suggested that the unnatural low flows in the summer impact the estuary, lead to silica depletion in the water flowing into the river and ultimately may impact the ability of diatoms to outcompete red tide organisms in the estuary. Other concerns are phosphorus levels as wetland, septic systems and beaches are flooded, reducing their filtering capacity. Paul noted that the PWD Board is neutral on this issue and lake levels won't impact their intake, which is in 85 feet of water.

Brad noted that FERC will make a ruling but has not provided a timeline. No ruling will be made until the DEP model is done. Historically, hydropower usage benefited from higher flows in summer. That changed in the 70s. The riprap you see on the lake shore to reduce erosion was not needed in the 60s and 70s.

Roger noted that to comment go to FERC, library general search in the docket, P-2984. Comments have been positive with the exception of the marina owners who have opposed the plan - noting that the $500,000 in improved hydro power might not offset potential losses to a $17.5M boating industry.

6.0 Roundtable:

SAPPI: Brad noted that SAPPI is working with PRLT and Gorham on several recreational areas (near Hawkes property, Gambo and just below Dundee). Construction of the fishway at Cumberland Mills has begun and it will be operational next year. They are drying up the channel for construction and flows will be low this summer as a result.

Will asked about student projects.
CCSWCD: Betty noted that their will be one YCC crew working in Cumberland County through 319 grant funding. Work will be on Little Sebago Lake, There will also be a maintenance and invasive species removal project at the Smelt Hill dam site funded through CBEP.
UM Cooperative Extension: Mitch noted that he is working with 4H on a project to create citizen scientists. Efforts include milfoil eradication on the Songo River and a Signs of the Season climate change program. He'd be interested in working with PRWC on a citizen scientist project.

American Rivers: Landis noted it was a busy winter working with the legislature. They are working with a group on the Royal River on fish passage improvements. They are also looking at the Crooked River and an applicant who wants to rebuild Scribner's Mill Dam. She is working with the statewide Connectivity group and is also working internationally on alewife passage on the St. Croix. Matt noted that there is also a group

in Cumberland County working on connectivity, identifying priority sites for work on fish passage and flooding at road crossings. The participants include Cumberland County, CEMA, CCSWCD and CBEP. Landis noted the need for a statewide list of connectivity projects and is starting to get the list going.

DEP: Don noted that the Pleasant River implementation project is having trouble getting into the farming community along the Pleasant River and asked if anyone has connections to get to these people. Wayne Munroe at NRCS and Dick Brzowski at UM Cooperative Extension may be good contacts.