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Three Rivers Land Trust

HORIZONS

2009 Winter Newsletter

FOCUSING ON THE PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE

Three Rivers Land Trust (TRLT) • Post Office Box 906 • Acton, Maine 04001-0906

A view of Shapleigh's Town Beach looking toward Square Pond, a special place that is protected forever by a conservation easement held by Three Rivers Land Trust.

Alfred-Shapleigh Conservation Collaboration

On Monday, November 10th the Alfred Conservation Commission held a joint meeting with the Shapleigh Conservation Commission to discuss open space preservation on an area known as Walnut Hill which borders the two towns as well as Sanford.

The meeting was moderated by Marcel Polak a Conservation Resource Advisor with the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions.

The area in question has been designated as the largest piece of unfragmented land in York County. This type of undeveloped open space provides a haven for the highest value wildlife. Known rare species include the Blanding Turtle, Spotted Turtle, Ringed Bog Hunter Dragonfly, the Black Racer Snake, plus, not so rare, moose, deer and bear. The area also contains a series of interconnected wetlands and vernal pools which are habitat for many rare species. The area is known as Walnut Hill and has been designated as a "focus area" by the State due to its significant wildlife habitat.

Preliminary discussions at the joint meeting focused around the following topics:

(1) The need to provide for open space conservation within this area;

(2) How to communicate with the landowners in this proposed open space protection area (i.e., letters and meetings);

(3) Identify methods and plans to conserve land in this proposed open space area;

(4) Communications with elected officials in each town to see if any town-owned land is located within this proposed open space area and to promote the idea that this land should be conserved with a conservation easement to assure its continuance as open space forever.

The groups will create detailed maps of the areas and attempt to identify specific locations which present the best areas for conservation. Follow up meetings will be held to focus on the development of detailed plans for conservation.

Sanford Conservation Plan Update

by Christine Feurt, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Coastal Training Program,
Wells Reserve

I wanted to give everyone a quick update on the progress of the Sanford Conservation Plan that many of you have worked on with us for the past year. This update will also check in with our many conservation partners who are interested in the work that Sanford is doing.

A steering committee including the Sanford Town Planner, Engineer, and Information Technology Director, Southern Maine Regional Planning, Spatial Alternatives and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve began to work on the planning process in early 2008. The Conservation Plan goal was developed to be in alignment with the town's Comprehensive Plan.

In May, June and September many of you joined us for community planning workshops to identify the conservation values and special places in Sanford and the ways those places connect regionally with surrounding towns.The Beginning with Habitat resources played a key role in this process.

The results of the community planning workshops were shared with the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs in Sanford in an effort to gather additional ideas and support for the plan. Conservation maps provided by the Mousam Way Land Trust were digitized and incorporated into the database developed during the summer workshops. Over 25 layers of conservation information have been incorporated into the conservation values maps for the town.

This fall the Town of Sanford hired Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh of SMRPC to conduct a build out analysis of the town to complement the conservation values maps prepared during the workshops. These two resources will be used to prepare Sanford's Conservation Plan and develop conservation scenarios to present to the Planning Board in early 2009.

As I reflect on the year's work on this project, I want to thank all of you for the time you devoted to identifying the resources of Sanford that are important to conserve. Sanford's water, productive lands, wildlife habitat and trail system provide benefits to the community and the region. I have learned that no one knows that better than the people of Sanford.

I look forward to working with you to complete this important project in 2009.

Emery and Gile Receive MACD Award

Maine Association of Conservation Districts has established a new award, the MACD Conservation Award, given to an individual, farm or organization that exemplifies conservation. Nominations are submitted by the 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The award is to be presented at the MACD Winter Meeting.

This year's award was presented to Sid Emery (left) and Alden Gile (right) for their work on the Sid Emery Demonstration Forest in York County.

They were honored by the York County SWCD as their 2008 Cooperator of the Year for their conservation efforts spanning almost 60 years in York County. After the devastation of the 1947 fires, Sid Emery, a Soil Conservation Service employee at the time, approached the Town of Lyman and worked with them to secure the donation of a 126-acre parcel to the District. Sid, Alden and others (led by Sid) planted hundreds of tree seedlings on the charred acres. For almost 60 years they have volunteered thousands of hours working in the forest. In addition to tree planting, they have pruned hundreds of trees, cleared and created trails, maintained signs and trail markers, directed volunteers for work days, given tours, filled the brochure rack and so much more. Even though they are in their golden years, they tirelessly work on this property. They also worked to develop the Demonstration Forest and the District honored Sid by naming the property the Sid Emery Demonstration Forest. Today, they both serve as Associate Supervisors, attend meetings regularly, serve on the Forestry Committee, and when the weather is good they can often be found on the forest with a saw in hand.

Sid Emery (left) and Alden Gile (right) receiving their MACD Conservation Award.

The casual visitor to the Demonstration Forest can observe forestry in action, by walking through several stands of white pine where they have released the pine by removing the overstory of red oak and red maple which don't grow very well on the District Forests soils. They have pruned the lower branches of the white pine crop trees and as the trees grow they will be pruned to 17' for best lumber quality. Visitors also benefit from the cleared trails, signage and more, but the most important is the open space, protected forever by their efforts.

Three Rivers Land Trust

Help control spread of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

Adelges tsugae, the hemlock woolly adelgid ("HWA"), is a non-native, aphid-like insect that feeds on hemlocks (*Tsuga spp.*). Specifically, this adelgid feeds at the bases of hemlock needles, causing them to dry out, leading to needle loss and the tree's inability to produce buds. While some species of hemlock are resistant to HWA (such as species of the northwestern U.S.), the two eastern species, eastern hemlock (T. *Canadensis*) and Carolina hemlock (T. *caroliniana*), are susceptible. Eastern U.S. areas infested with HWA experience extensive tree mortality.

HWA's first occurrence in the eastern U.S. occurred in 1951 in Virginia. By 1990, infestations had reached Massachusetts, and in 2003, the insect was first found on native hemlock in Maine. This past summer (July 2008), HWA was found at Ferry Beach State Park in Saco. While this is the most northern infestation known in the eastern U.S., HWA's native range would allow it to spread much further north.

As summarized in the Maine Forest Service's Environmental Assessment for proposed methods of managing the adelgid (Nov. 2007), hemlock is a valuable component of Maine's forests and local communities. It accounts for 9% of the state's softwood inventory, and 5% of Maine's total forest inventory. It provides a tenth of the wood consumed by Maine's paper and lumber industries, which translates to the support of approximately 2% of Maine's entire economy.

Most of us here in southern Maine have experienced the more personal gifts of a mature hemlock stand - the shade it provides in summer heat, the protection it gives from rain or snow, or the way the long-lived giants are particularly good at reminding us of how small we are. Ecologically, this shade and cover is vital to streamside habitats and to wildlife needing shelter, such as ruffed grouse, turkey, deer, snowshoe hare, and rabbit.

To slow the spread of HWA, the Maine Forest Service has planned a multi-faceted control plan, including chemical and biological controls. However, an essential component is public awareness to help locate outbreaks.

What can we do?

1) Not move hemlock trees, seedlings or nursery stock from infested areas (in Maine, this includes nearly all of York County coastal towns up to Saco, and the town of South Berwick).

2) Look for the following signs of infestation on our properties and during hikes.

- White woolly masses at the base of needles on undersides of hemlock twigs; these are most visible from late fall to early summer. (The MFS website provides photographs of other insect sign that can be confused with HWA.)
- Off-color needles, often with a grayish cast.
- Premature needle drop and twig dieback.

3) Adopt a stand of hemlock and become an MFS volunteer with the "Take a Stand for Hemlocks" program. Contact: Allison Kanoti (207) 287-3147.

If found, note its location and call the Maine Forest Service at (207) 287-2431 or

Toll Free (in Maine) 1-800-367-0223.

Sources: U.S. Forest Service website, *"Hemlock Woolly Adelgid - Distribution Maps,"* accessed December 20, 2008; Maine Forest Service website *"SPECIAL ALERT: Help Slow the Spread of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid in Maine,"* accessed December 20, 2008; Maine Forest Service's *Environmental Assessment Regarding Management of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Impacts In Maine,* November 2007; U.S. Forest Service Pub. FHTET-2001-03, "Hemlock Woolly Adelgid," March 2001.

Creating an Alliance to Restore and Protect the Watersheds of the Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers

By Landis Hudson, Program Director
Maine Rivers, www.mainerivers.org

Maine Rivers began in 1998 as an informal group made up of river advocates, and local and statewide watershed organizations. Maine Rivers initially operated as a program of the Natural Resources Council of Maine but in 2003 became an independent stand-alone 501(c) 3 organization.

We have served as an umbrella organization for the formation of emerging watershed organizations, providing them with technical assistance and guidance. We have held numerous conferences to bring together concerned river advocates to focus on local and state-wide river problems, and to educate participants about potential legislative remedies.

We are currently involved in projects throughout the state which focus on native fish restoration, water reclassification, restoration of free flowing rivers, water quality improvement, monitoring Riverfront Bond funds approved in 2007, and monitoring plans to regulate water withdrawals from Maine Rivers. A current focus is also improving the watersheds of the Kennebunk and Mousam Rivers.

The Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers have their headwaters in central York County and flow into the sea in the towns of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport. Historically these two rivers were rich with great runs of many diadromous fish species; fish which spend part of their lives in freshwater and part of their lives in saltwater. Fish species such as the Atlantic salmon, American shad, alewives, blueback herring, American eel, and sea-run brook trout relied on access to the freshwater of the Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers during critical parts of their lifecycles. Each of these species was important to the overall ecology and health of the watershed, bringing important nutrients into the freshwater environment and serving as food for other fish, birds and wildlife. These fish were also key economic and cultural resources for the human populations in the watershed and provided sustenance and extremely valuable commercial fisheries.

Today, many of these species are entirely absent from the Mousam and Kennebunk River watersheds or present at very low levels. The loss of these species from our rivers, streams, lakes and ponds has far reaching implications, not just for the freshwater environment but also the estuarine and marine environments.

Unfortunately, both rivers have been largely overlooked by state and federal natural resource agencies, while local entities have tended to focus on discrete, localized issues and have not looked at these rivers from the broader "watershed" perspective. Like many other watersheds, there are numerous sources of pollution, both point source and non-point source pollution have degraded water quality and threaten the ecological integrity of these rivers. Our goal is to bring together all of those entities that have an interest in these rivers so that they will collaborate and begin to address the suite of problems facing these watersheds through a holistic, comprehensive approach. Once this grassroots structure is achieved, this new entity can educate both the citizens living in the watersheds and the municipal, state, and federal government entities responsible for managing these rivers. This then can bring about real action to protect, restore and enhance the Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers.

The Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers have great potential for restoration. As Alan Levere of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection wrote: "A river is the report card for its watershed." Just as it will take collaboration from many individuals and organizations to work to improve the health of these rivers, a great many people will benefit from the successes. We hope to become a catalyst for this change.

We seek to bring together existing local organizations, state and federal agencies, individuals (citizens and students), and municipalities with the goal of educating people about both the problems facing these two rivers and the opportunities available to protect, restore, and enhance their watersheds. From this, we hope to launch a broad, grassroots watershed organization that will address these many issues. While Maine Rivers intends to act as a resource to educate citizens and bring together other organizations, part of the mission will be to work with participants to find out which local issues are of greatest concern. Partner organizations will include:

Alfred Conservation Commission
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Kennebunk Conservation Commission
Kennebunkport Conservation Trust
Maine Rivers
The Nature Conservancy
Trout Unlimited
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Program
Wells Natural Estuarine Research Reserve
York County Soil & Water Conservation District

We have learned that by educating people about current sources of pollution and challenges faced by the watershed, they will be better prepared to influence future decisions that will have a positive impact on the watershed.

The overall objective is to educate all local citizens about their connections to the Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers and the value and vitality these rivers represent. We believe that a strong local watershed organization could work to eliminate or significantly reduce the sources of point and non-point source pollution which degrade these rivers. Ultimately, we believe river restoration efforts will make it possible to bring back populations of native sea-run fish species through habitat restoration, enhancement, and protection.

Maine Rivers is organizing a conference to be held in the spring of 2009 to focus attention on the watersheds of the Kennebunk and Mousam Rivers. Preparation for the conference includes contacting individuals and organization that can provide information and help answer some of the following questions:

- Wildlife and fish populations: what's known, what's not known, and why this matters;
- Review of fish passage and dams;
- Creation of a fisheries restoration plan;
- Sources of non-point/point source pollution: options for addressing these issues;
- Water quality; and
- Local land conservation plans and strategies.

Please contact us if you are willing to participate.

A Thank you to our Supporters and Volunteers:

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