



The Newsletter of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Stewarding land and community access in the Presumpscot River Watershed for over 25 years

Summer 2015

Highland Lake, Mill Brook, and River Herring

By Peter Murray, Jason M. Smith, and Theodore Willis, PhD

Standing on an escarpment above Highland Lake in Windham during autumn, it is not hard, even for the layperson, to imagine the environmental forces that created the course of a river, which by virtue of the industry of man became Highland Lake. For many millennia the cold-water stream we now know as Mill Brook ran free, and within its water the river herring journeyed to spawn.

From the time of Proctor's Bucket Mill in the 19th century, and probably earlier sawmills, the body of water known as Duck Pond was forced to evolve into Highland Lake. Societal needs and natural design, two divergent hierarchies, contributed to forming the lake we know and love.

Today, the progeny of the fish that were cut off from Duck Pond in the name of progress are long gone. Their legacy has been carried forth by cousins caught up in a new societal need to see a rebalancing of progress and nature in Mill Brook, indeed in the whole Presumpscot watershed. Progeny of fish trapped and trucked to Highland Lake by the Maine Dept. of Marine Resources a decade ago now make their annual migration from the great oceans in the tens of thousands. However, like any balancing act, there are

wobbles: fluctuations in water levels and temperatures, beaver dams, and the drive to ascend a daunting fish ladder hamper the recovery.



This largemouth bass, with an alewife tail hanging from its mouth, is part of the piscatory welcoming committee in Highland Lake. Photo: Jason M. Smith and Nathan J. Broadus

The hidden gem of Mill Brook stretches through an urban yet largely undeveloped valley, offering human visitors a respite of tranquility in the midst of commercial chaos surrounding Maine's largest urban center, the Greater Portland area. A designated deer yard, a healthy population of turkeys, and a trout fishery, amongst many other significant populations of intriguing wildlife, herald a healthy environment for the alewife and its predators. It is the people who frequent the valley, individuals and groups who are working in concert to preserve the wildness of Mill Brook and steward the system to that nature-society equilibrium, that are making a difference in restoring alewife to their former glory.

Integral to these efforts is the local Highland Lake River Herring Monitoring Program. By enlisting the aid of volunteers, also known as citizen scientists (www.citsci.org), this program is increasing our knowledge of the alewives and blueback herring populations that have significant impact from an economic and ecological perspective. By counting

—Cont'd on following page—



Pictured here, PRLT President Mike Parker shakes hands with Robert "T-Bone" Randall, son of landowner Dick Randall, at a May 2 event to celebrate the conservation of Randall Orchards. PRLT is grateful for the many partners and supporters who made this project a success, most especially Dick Randall. His vision saw this project through, but his generosity goes on—he has just made an incredibly generous gift of \$100,000 to launch PRLT's first-ever endowment fund. Thank you, Dick, from the bottom of our hearts.



Alewives passing the top of Highland Lake Fish Ladder

in thirty-minute intervals four times a day during the alewife's run scientists can estimate the number of fish that potentially spawn in the system and return to the ocean. Learn more: <http://www.river-herring.org>

The staff and a bevy of volunteers were challenged this year by a particular flat-tailed player in the Mill Brook ecosystem. Barriers, like logjams and beaver dams, are scattered throughout the brook but were of little concern in 2014; PRLT Board member Matthew Craig found two logjams and quickly breached them in that year. This year, on the other hand, the fish were inhibited by more than twenty logjams and completely blocked by six beaver dams because the dry spring stimulated the beavers' need to create standing water. No alewife made it to Highland Lake until Maine Department of Marine Resources personnel lowered the dam height feeding the fish ladder, increasing the water flow down Mill Brook. River Herring spend most of their lives in the open ocean and need a clear path to their spawning grounds or they will omit spawning and turn around or find a new watercourse to spawn in. As evidence of that, volunteers counted 8,789 fish in 2014 compared to just 1,249 in 2015. The extrapolated estimate of total fish in the run is about 10% of last year's.

The number of volunteers has increased over last year, and we look forward to continuing that trend next spring. Maintaining a clear path from the Presumpscot to High-

land Lake, and counting the fish as they enter the lake, takes people power - 2015 was a clear demonstration of that. The authors would like to thank our present volunteers, and encourage PRLT members who would like to participate and enjoy a glimpse of nature within a thriving community contact program co-coordinator Jason Smith (Jason.m.smith@maine.edu, 207-251-1628). A special thanks to land owners whose property abuts the waters of the Mill Brook for allowing the volunteers to access the stream. Through their participation volunteers were given a great opportunity to see Bald Eagles, Red Tail Hawks, and Black Crown Night Herons in the natural wonder that is Mill Brook Valley.

To learn more about the project and who is supporting this program you can also visit the Highland Lake Monitoring Program on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Highland-Lake-River-Herring-Monitoring-Program/705813666204604>)

Editor's note: Jason Smith is a master's candidate at the Muskie School of Public Service. Dr. Willis is an adjunct research scientist at the University of Southern Maine. Peter Murray is a Westbrook freelance writer.



The largest beaver dam found this season near the Austin Street culvert and fish ladder.

Exciting new partnership with Greater Gorham Farmers Market



PRLT is teaming up with the Greater Gorham Farmers Market to provide a great benefit for our members. All new and renewing members in 2015 will receive a 10 percent discount on their purchases from participating vendors! This benefit is good all season long. (When members join or renew, they will receive a card to access the discount.) Thank you to the local farmers and vendors for making it happen.

The Greater Gorham Farmers Market is open Saturday mornings, 8:30-12:30, through October. It is located on South Street in Gorham between Baxter Library and PRLT's headquarters at McLellan House.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER:

Paying tribute to my new friend, Galen Chambers



I enjoy retrieving the mail at PO Box 33 because it is like taking the pulse of the organization I have been entrusted to lead. Last October, with the usual anticipation, I retrieved a promotional flyer from Quill for office supplies; one of many fuel bills, attesting to the porosity of the walls at our historic McLellan House headquarters; and a small hand-addressed envelope. I opened the small envelope first because they are often the most exciting. This one from Galen Chambers took the prize for excitement. It contained a check for \$5,000 with instructions “to help buy land for the enjoyment of those who like the great outdoors in the Gorham/Windham area. I hope this money will provide access to land on which hunting and fishing are allowed.” Who is Galen Chambers and why would he choose PRLT to fulfill his wishes? I had to find out.

I called him that day and learned he was under Hospice Care at home, where he informed me he was “on his last legs.” Perhaps physically he was, but his voice was strong, his mind sparkly as sunlight on rapids. I made an appointment to meet him the next day.

We were both rewarded, I think, by our bedside banter. He told me of a life that would have meshed well with mine if we had met earlier. He was born on a farm in Gorham in 1928, but his family promptly moved to Haverhill, Massachusetts. He returned to Gorham at age 16 to live with a sister within a mile of his present home,



Galen Chambers

met a local girl named Beatrice, served on Guam and returned to marry Beatrice and become a lathe operator for S. D. Warren for five years. Beatrice urged him to return to school. He graduated from (then) Gorham Normal School, taught for a time in Windham, got his Master's Degree in geology at Cornell, and in the next 21 years became a revered teacher and mentor in the Portland school system.

Though he and I had the same college major and each had teaching experience, our fun together would have begun in earnest in his retirement years. Galen loved the woods and the waterways and I am sure we would have experienced them together. He was an avid and accomplished hunter and fisherman, which means we shared a love for wild places. Judging by his enthusiasm for what PRLT is doing along one of his fishing streams, Mill Brook in Westbrook, I feel confident he would have become a central figure in PRLT as guide, advocate and teacher if only we had met sooner.

Galen and I swapped stories and enjoyed each other's company for only a couple of weeks before our friendship was cut short by his illness. He passed away on the day before Thanksgiving, attended by his wife, Linda, now an active PRLT member.

The twinkle in the way Galen reflected on his life was one of the rewards of being PRLT President; his unforeseen financial contribution rewarded PRLT for promoting his conservation ideals. With our emphasis on public access to our holdings, I am confident we are being good stewards of both his gift and his ideals.

Galen is pictured in the President's Corner, an expression of fondness for my late new friend.

- Mike Parker

PRLT Mission: Conserve and protect outstanding lands in Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook, and Windham to preserve the character of the Presumpscot River watershed for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Focus on Business Member Sarah McDaniel, Esq.

Attorney Sarah McDaniel takes a break from her computer screen to catch a glimpse of the turtles, cormorants, and the occasional bald eagle and fox enjoying the Presumpscot River as it flows past her office window in the Dana Warp Mill. Most weekends, she can be found with her dog and teenage daughter hiking on PRLT's properties near her Gorham home. Sarah has been a business supporter of PRLT for several years, from her time as sole owner of Maine Land Law LLC, and continuing in recent years through her new law firm, Douglas McDaniel Campo & Schools LLC, PA.

Sarah worked for a state-wide land trust before attending Harvard Law School and sees law as an extension of her love of wildlife and land conservation. She focuses her practice in property law: closing real estate transactions, litigating boundary and access disputes, and helping landowners conserve their land and convey family camps to the next generation. She frequently helps clients obtain or challenge land use permits, including appealing decisions through the courts all the way to the Maine Supreme Court if necessary.

Sarah said she finds fulfillment in protecting open spaces, whether in urban or wild environments. "Cases where open space is protected are unquestionably my favorite part of law practice," she said. Sarah's legal counsel

helped secure the preservation of Congress Square Park in downtown Portland, the protection of working farmland in York and Waldo Counties, the preservation of 30,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County and the preservation of 30 acres of wetland bird habitat in Washington County, among many other projects. Sarah is proud to add PRLT's work in the Mill Brook watershed to her list of land conservation successes.



Business Member Sarah McDaniel, Esq.

The firm's other attorneys, Tom Douglas, Ben Campo and Anne Schools, represent individuals and business clients facing a wide range of legal concerns. Personal injury and wrongful death, divorce, bankruptcy, OUI defense, creditor rights, business transactions, construction disputes, employment law, and appeals are a sampling of the firm's diverse areas of practice.

Each attorney brings a unique set of skills and experience to the firm. "We continue to learn from each other and challenge each other," Sarah said. "When someone calls a lawyer, they may be facing a very stressful situation, preparing for an important life transition, or simply be confused about their legal rights. I love that my job allows me to help people understand their rights and guide their way through the legal process to resolve their concerns."

2015 PRLT Board of Directors

Joanne Chessey, Sebago | Andy Colvin, Portland | Matthew Craig, Cape Elizabeth
Richard Curtis, Gorham - Vice President | Brad Goulet, Biddeford | Ben Lord, Gorham - Treasurer
Wells Lyons, Portland - Secretary | Mike Parker, Windham - President
Sarah Plummer, Gorham | Robert Alan Wake, PhD, JD, Windham | Donald Wescott, Gorham

New Executive Director to Take Reins This Fall!

As the newsletter goes to print, PRLT has just finalized the hiring of our new Executive Director, Rachelle Curran Apse! With her passion for conservation, experience in many aspects of nonprofit work, and local roots, we believe Rachelle will be an excellent fit for this important position. Stay tuned for a full introduction in our next newsletter.

Meet Chelsea Malacara – PRLT Summer Stewardship Coordinator

By Don Wescott, Stewardship Chair



Chelsea Malacara,
Stewardship Coordinator

We knew Chelsea was special when we had our first conversation and saw her resumé. She had spent five summers working for the Student Conservation Association as Community and National Crew Leader, Program Assistant and Work Skills Instructor. One of her proficiencies is designing sustainable trails. Hmm. And PRLT has just acquired 75 acres of steep and wild land in need of new trails and a management plan. What a fit for our summer needs! We hired her for 165 hours to coordinate our summer stewardship projects, prepare baseline reports on properties needing them, and write a management plan for the Mill Brook properties.

A Wisconsin native, Chelsea is currently a junior at the University of Southern Maine (USM) with an Environmental Planning and Policy major. Concurrently, she is working on her Master's Degree in Policy, Planning and Management. What we didn't know until very recently is that Chelsea was named one of only seven Maine Policy Scholars in the University of Maine System (UMS). In a press release USM notes that only one such scholar is selected from each UMS campus. Each scholar spends the year tackling a real-life policy issue facing Maine. Chelsea intends to focus on vernal pool conservation on

private lands in Maine. Her results will be presented in a briefing to the Governor in the late spring of 2016.

While helping lead our summer stewardship projects, Chelsea has applied her trail design knowledge to improve several PRLT public-access properties. With significant support from IDEXX and United Way volunteers, several bridges were constructed or improved, and trails along steep inclines were widened or rerouted.

Trail users have commented very favorably on the upgrades accomplished with Chelsea's guidance. Adopted as best practices, these improvements will help make all of our public access trail systems safer and more hiker-friendly. PRLT is fortunate to have found such a talented addition to our staff. Thanks, Chelsea.



Chelsea manages Rita Cantor's Right Fine Crew from IDEXX on Little River property

Staffing and Finances Update

By Ben Lord, PRLT Treasurer

I am pleased to report that PRLT, with your generous support, is entering its thirtieth year in its best fiscal health ever.

The small envelope in October from Galen Chambers (see President's Corner) was the beginning of a cascade of events of great import to PRLT. Our membership reached a new high in response to the Cabela's kayak prize and our outreach to Westbrook. We had a resoundingly good 2014 Annual Fund result of \$28,000, triple our previous best and greatly aided by a circle of four members who matched Galen's gift and several other individuals and businesses in four figures. Our operating budget of \$33,500 - including 10 critical hours per week of Tania's steadying staff time and 165 hours of Chelsea's valuable Stewardship Coordinator time - was fully funded by the end of December for the entire fiscal year of 2015.

The cascade continued with the May announcement at the Randall Orchards conservation dedication that Dick Randall had given PRLT \$100,000 toward our first ever endowment fund and \$10,000 for stewardship. Concurrently, Tania announced that she will leave her staff position in September and the Board voted to seek a 20 hour-per-week Executive Director and a 5 hour-per-week clerical assistant. This staffing increase, beginning in September, is presently funded through February 2016, an excellent start, since membership renewals are ongoing and the 2015 Annual Fund will kick off in October.

Finally, at this writing the Search Committee is concluding deliberations on a very exciting candidate for Executive Director who we feel will provide a seamless transition from Tania in September. She will be introduced and then lead our Annual Meeting on October 6.

Opening Soon – Final Section of Sebago to the Sea Trail

By Tania Zuckerman, Coalition Coordinator for PRLT

Begun in 2007 as a project of the Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition, the vision for the Sebago to the Sea Trail (S2S) project was to establish a contiguous trail from Sebago Lake to Casco Bay. The project team grew into the Sebago to the Sea Coalition, led by PRLT. While we celebrated the opening of the trail in October 2012, pedestrians were not yet able to walk the entire 28 miles. At the time, Section 4 from South Windham to Westbrook was limited to a paddle route down the Presumpscot River because that section of the Mountain Division Rail Corridor (route of the land trail) was closed for construction to lay new tracks. Now, thanks to the Maine Department of Transportation, the hard work of the Town of Windham and City of Westbrook, and generous support from Gorham Savings Bank and Westbrook Trail Blazes snowmobile club, this will soon be open for pedestrians to use for as long as the railway remains inactive.

This section of S2S will not provide an ideal surface for walking in some areas where the only option is to walk on rock ballast and ties between the tracks. However, it is well worth the effort. Walking from South Windham toward Westbrook the first mile and a half of this section has a dirt surface and the entire 5 miles is quiet and

serene with beautiful views of the river and rural scenery. It is the most remote section of trail with not much tree cover and no connecting trails or roads, so please be prepared.

The timeline for opening is pending pedestrian improvements being made by the Town of Windham on the Mal-lison Road overpass and S2S Coalition placement of new trail signs. We expect these will be completed in time for a summer ribbon-cutting and hike. The City of Westbrook (Trail Manager of the Westbrook portion) has recently installed a kiosk on Bridge Street where this segment connects to the Westbrook Downtown Loop. Watch prlt.org and sebagotothesea.org for announcements of this public event.

Beyond the opening of this section in its current condition, the vision is to build a rail-side trail similar to the paved portion of the trail from Otter Ponds to South Windham, where the traffic includes bicyclists as well as pedestrians. Engineering and design work has already been completed, but Coalition members will need to raise significant funds for this vision to become reality. Hope to see you out on the trail!

Volunteer Heather Valley on her work with PRLT

Heather Valley has been an office volunteer for PRLT for the past 4 years. She came to us because of her interest in and passion for the environment. She is a Customer Support Supervisor with Idexx, studied Marine Biology and Oceanography in college, and is currently pursuing an MBA. Many times, when we are in need of mailing support, Heather has generously offered her time. And we so value her on-going help with PRLT's outreach and fundraising efforts - Thank you Heather! What moves her to do this? Tania Zuckerman interviewed Heather to find out.

Why did you want to get involved with PRLT?

Growing up in Vermont, free time was always spent playing in the woods or hanging out with neighbors sugaring and planting gardens. Now living in a city, I wanted to do my part to preserve some of the beautiful land that surrounds us here in Maine.

What most excites you about land conservation and stewardship efforts in Maine?

Portland is one of the few places I know where within 10 minutes of downtown you can visit beautiful farms and nature trails. Conservation of this life style is what excites me. We really get to enjoy the best of both worlds. These landscapes allow us all to recharge our batteries and remember what is important.

Why do you find volunteering in this capacity rewarding?

I am a volunteer addict. Before a recent move I also served on the City of South Portland's Energy and Recycling Committee, and I still spend time helping with the MITA trails. All the work is toward a common goal of reminding people how important nature is, and I am lucky to work for a company that encourages volunteer time.

Join the PRLT Volunteer Pool.

You've got talent and we'd like to use it! PRLT is always looking for individual volunteers and groups to assist with our stewardship, outreach, and administrative duties. If you'd like to help, please email info@prlt.org with your interests, skills, and availability, and we will be in touch with volunteer opportunities. Everyone has something to offer, so we'd love to hear from you!

Upcoming PRLT Events

Friday, July 31, 5:30 – 7:00

Hike the soon-to-be-donated Hatt Property with member and prospective donor Ralph Hatt as guide. Park along Willow Drive off Route 302 in Westbrook and see what Ralph has created on one of the most beautiful properties in Westbrook.

Saturday, August 15, 9:00 – 11:00 am

Experience the new and existing PRLT trails along Mill Brook and see others that are proposed. Meet at the new unnamed road across from 802 Methodist Road in Westbrook. RSVP to info@prlt.org

Saturday, August 29, 10:00 – 11:00

Get Acquainted with the Chessey Property on the shore of Brown Pond off Hancock Pond Road in Sebago with your PRLT guide. Bring a picnic and

fishing gear and stay around. Park along the cemetery just north of 178 Hancock Pond Road. RSVP to info@prlt.org.

Summer (date and time TBA soon)

Grand Opening of S2S Trail, Section 4, Meet at Mallison Road overpass; Park in Old Mill parking lot adjacent to railroad bed off Mallison Road in Windham. Round trip hike toward Westbrook to follow.

October 6, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Annual Meeting at St Joseph's College off White's Bridge Road in Standish, Alford Auditorium, Speaker and Topic to be announced, Meet and greet new PRLT Executive Director Rachele Curran Apse.



2015 Donation & Membership Form

The Presumpscot Regional Land Trust (PRLT) continues to protect and steward more land and manage more projects within the Presumpscot River watershed and western shore area of Sebago Lake than ever before. This could not be possible without the generous support of individuals and businesses.

Renew or join PRLT today, or make a gift to our Annual Fund. Help us build on our success. As a member, you receive the benefits of our newsletters, invitations to events, and opportunities to engage further in the land trust. You also receive the benefit of knowing you made the difference to help us conserve treasured places in our communities for us and our children.

___ Yes, I would like to make a gift to PRLT in the amount of \$_____

___ Yes, I support the work of PRLT by becoming a Member for 2015. My check is enclosed.

2015 Membership Dues: (membership is good for one year from sign-up)

___ \$25 (Individual)

___ \$35 (Family) How many in family? ___

___ \$50 (Supporting)

___ \$100 (Patron)

___ \$250 (Associate)

___ \$500 (Partner)

___ Other Amount

\$_____ Additional Donation: (to be applied to greatest need)

Please make check payable to:

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Mail to: PO Box 33, Gorham, ME 04038

Thank you for your support!

As a 501(c)(3), all donations to the PRLT are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Total Donation: \$ _____ **Name:** _____

Address: _____

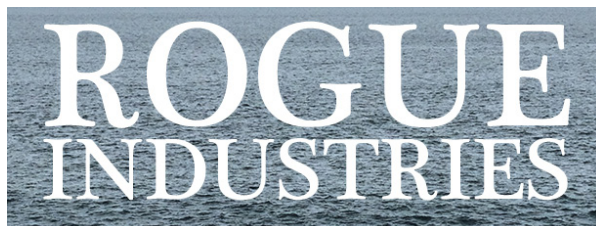
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Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

PO Box 33, Gorham, Maine 04038 | info@prlt.org | www.prlt.org

Businesses Show their Support of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust



GORHAM HOUSE OF PIZZA

To find out about getting your company's name here, as well as other business member benefits, email info@prlt.org.

THANK YOU from PRLT!