



The Newsletter of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Supporting healthy lands, waters, wildlife and people across the Presumpscot River watershed

Fall/Winter 2016

Three Conservation Groups Become One

The merger of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, Windham Land Trust, and Presumpscot River Watch will strengthen conservation efforts in the region

The historical timelines of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, Presumpscot River Watch, and Windham Land Trust stretch for 30, 27, and 16 years respectively. Each begins with the words “A group of concerned citizens formed ...” and each shows many milestones for local conservation over the years.

These three timelines have now blended into one--and it is headed toward many more accomplishments in the future.

After nearly a year of discussion, members of all three groups have voted to merge as one organization with the name Presumpscot Regional Land Trust. The vote took place (after a hearty helping of pie) during an October 2 celebration at Randall Orchards in Standish.

The unification will help make the three organizations stronger and more sustainable. It will not only ensure that we can steward conserved lands in perpetuity, but improve our ability to respond to land and water quality conservation needs in the future.

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust was founded in 1986 and has conserved land in Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Windham and Westbrook. Founded in 2000, Windham Land Trust has conserved lands in Gorham, Gray, and Windham. The two organizations share much of the same coverage area, along with many members and values—making the two organizations a natural fit.



**WINDHAM
LAND TRUST**



“I am excited about the merger with Presumpscot Regional Land Trust and Presumpscot River Watch,” said Priscilla Payne, Board Co-President of the Windham Land Trust. “Working together, we will be able to have a greater impact on land conservation in the area, have more volunteers to be better able to steward all of our properties, and to continue to monitor the water quality of our streams and rivers.”

Founded in 1989, Presumpscot River Watch uses volunteers to sample and test water quality at points on the Presumpscot River and its tributaries. With a shared commitment between the two land trusts of ensuring *(article continues on page 2)*

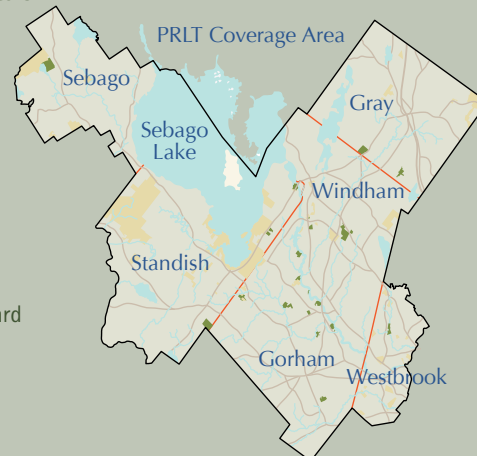
Presumpscot Regional Land Trust Celebrating 30 years

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust supports healthy lands, waters, wildlife, and people across the Presumpscot River watershed through conservation, water quality monitoring, education, and public access – and conserves land in the towns of Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook and Windham.

The Land Trust has 25 Preserves, conserving over 1,400 acres of land with miles of trails that are free and open to the public, including the 28-mile Sebago to the Sea Trail. Learn more at www.prlt.org.

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Toby Jacobs, *Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator*



Windham Land Trust voting for the merger

Letter from the Executive Director

I have now been on the job for over a year, and one of the most rewarding experiences I've had is helping facilitate Presumpscot Regional Land Trust's merger with Windham Land Trust and Presumpscot River Watch. I want to acknowledge and thank the volunteer board members who spent hundreds of hours committed to the effective unification of these three organizations in order to be a more sustainable regional organization. This merger also would not have been possible without the support of our members.



It was such a delight to have over 100 of our members and supporters join us at Randall Orchards on October 2 for our annual meeting and celebration, which included homemade pie for everyone.

In the upcoming year, we will be looking strategically at our plan for the next five years. The vital first step will be getting your feedback on what matters most to you about our work. We look forward to having you take part in conversations that will help build a sustainable vision for our shared future.
-Rachelle Curran Apse

(cover story continued from front page) water quality, the inclusion of Presumpscot River Watch in the merger will help strengthen these important initiatives.

"Presumpscot River Watch has been using citizen scientists to monitor water quality in the main stem of the river and its many tributaries since 1989. Our monitoring results are used by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to determine compliance with state water quality standards," said Fred Dillon, President of Presumpscot River Watch. "This merger represents an exciting and important evolution in enhancing our mission to protect and preserve the watershed for future generations."

This past winter, board leadership discussed the possibility of merging organizations. After learning from the merger experiences of other Maine land trusts, the boards formed a merger committee with board members from all three organizations. Thanks to primary grant funding by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Maine Community Foundation, and extensive pro bono legal services from Pierce Atwood and Douglas, McDaniel, Campo and Schools, the three organizations were able to fully review each other's lands and financial reports, as well as create a merger agreement and new bylaws.

Going forward, Presumpscot Regional Land Trust is committed to continuing the mission-based work of all three organizations. The unified organization has 25 conserved lands equaling about 1,400 acres—including 10 public access preserves with miles of trails and fishing access in the towns of Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook and Windham. The new organization will continue to coordinate the 28-mile Sebago to the Sea Trail project, and monitor water quality at 20 sites along the Presumpscot River and its tributaries.

"This is a wonderful confluence of events and organizations," said Mike Parker, Presumpscot Regional Land Trust Board President. "On the 30th anniversary of its existence, the newly merged Presumpscot Regional Land Trust has much to celebrate and will be a strong force in support of its broadened mission." -Andy Colvin, board member



Julie Randall welcoming everyone to Randall Orchards

Letter From the President

By all measures, Presumpscot Regional Land Trust's thirtieth year has been stellar.

We hired the remarkable Toby Jacobs half-time as Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator. We have broadened and strengthened our mission by joining forces with Windham Land Trust



and Presumpscot River Watch. We have added 30 gorgeous acres of Ralph Hatt's property to the Mill Brook Preserve and produced a video you may soon enjoy of Ralph with two childhood friends exploring Mill Brook. Toby has directed construction of the Mill Brook Trail and we expect to add two new parcels to expand Mill Brook Preserve trails and add a new trailhead. Our committees are stronger than ever, with an infusion of new members and expertise from the merger.

We are about to launch our annual appeal with the goal by the end of this year of fully funding our operating budget for the year ahead, as we did last year. With your participation and support, the new Presumpscot Regional Land Trust is poised for another exceptional year. -Mike Parker

30 Years of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust: Highlights along the Journey

As I look back on all the impressive accomplishments Presumpscot Regional Land Trust has had in the past 30 years, three stand out most. Someone else might choose differently, but to me these moments represent our growth, our expanding understanding of what it means to be a land trust, and perseverance in the face of disappointment and difficulty. With that preamble, they are:



Little River Preserve in Gorham

LITTLE RIVER. This is the first significant (although donated by the developer) property we owned and our first opportunity to put boots on the ground. There was a lot for us to learn, especially in the area of stewardship and how to implement it for this special place. For me, the main highlight of the Little River Preserve is its essential wildness. Whether you are floating down the river or on hiking across one of the ravines, it seems as though you are 100 miles from anywhere, not just 2 miles from downtown Gorham.

HAWKES PRESERVE. This was the first time we had to raise a considerable amount of money to purchase a property. It took a whole new level of outreach and engagement. There are two highlights to mention. First, the historic element with a third of a mile of towpath and remains of the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, dating from the 1850s. The second has been the construction of the Great Falls Elementary School abutting this property. Teachers, parents and students have made the Hawkes Preserve a vital adjunct to their curriculum, holding nature walks and helping with trail construction.

We are thrilled to have an opportunity to expose these young people to nature at an early age.



Students helping to build the Hawkes Preserve trail

RANDALL FARM and PRESERVE. To bring this project over the finish line we had to work with a number of other groups and agencies, both State and Federal, and to navigate the Land for Maine's Future program. Money raising was a major challenge. Now, we are proud to have 500 acres conserved, with over 300 of them as local sustainable agriculture. It represents our largest conservation undertaking so far.



Randall Orchards in Standish

All of those achievements and many more have been made possible by the hard work and generosity of our founders, members, volunteers, and staff. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed. I look forward to seeing this success grow in the years as our efforts are strengthened by the merger with Windham Land Trust and Presumpscot River Watch.

-Richard Curtis, committee member and then board member of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust since 1989 and served as President for over a decade

Get to Know Windham Land Trust

Windham Land Trust was founded in 2000 by a group of Windham residents determined to save a pristine piece of Windham land from development. This work led to the successful acquisition of the 105-acre Black Brook Preserve and recognition that ongoing land preservation was important to retaining open space and the unique character of Windham. There are two miles of trails to explore on this popular Preserve. Volunteers just completed a new bridge dedicated to the memory of John Hagar, a Windham resident and strong supporter of the land trust.

The Windham Land Trust has been a small all-volunteer organization and has relied on many volunteers to help with trail and Preserve stewardship. The mission of the Windham Land Trust has always been to conserve and protect open spaces in Windham and the surrounding areas.

Since 2012, this has also included monitoring water quality of the brooks that run through our preserves. Windham Land Trust has accepted donations of various types of undeveloped lands including fields, wetlands and woodlands either through outright donations or through conservation easements. Windham Land Trust has also worked with Maine Farmland trust to help preserve agricultural land, including the 80-plus-acre Weeks farm in Windham.



Windham fourth graders visiting Black Brook Preserve

In 2006, Drs. James and Jane Pringle donated the 17-acre Pringle Preserve. An observation deck on the Preserve was built by the Boy Scouts for an Eagle Scout project. It is an excellent place for bird watching and stargazing.

Windham Land Trust also holds a conservation easement on the Freeman Farm in Gray. The easement on this land was donated by the Freeman family.

Windham Land Trust is very excited about the merger with Presumpscot Regional Land Trust and Presumpscot River Watch and eagerly looks to a future working together not only to conserve land but to protect and maintain current Preserves and ensure public access.

*-Priscilla Payne,
former Co-President of Windham Land Trust*



Windham Land Trust conducting water quality testing

In 2003, Jack Dunham donated the 63-acre Frog Hollow Farm located on Winslow Road in Gorham. This beautiful piece of land is used for hiking, fishing, and hunting with written permission. This Preserve has two small ponds, a variety of apple trees, and is home to recently planted American Chestnut trees.



Black Brook Preserve

The Ongoing Evolution of Presumpscot River Watch

In 1989, after over a century of development and industrialization along the banks of the Presumpscot River, a group of concerned citizens joined together to form the Presumpscot River Watch, a volunteer organization dedicated to assessing the health of the watershed through water quality monitoring. With the help of University of Southern Maine biology professors and students, Presumpscot River Watch routinely sampled for dissolved oxygen, temperature, nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorus), E. coli (indicator of fecal contamination) and aquatic macroinvertebrates (indicators of longer-term water quality trends).

In 1994, while continuing to conduct ongoing water quality monitoring, Presumpscot River Watch also published a seminal compendium on the cultural and natural history of the Presumpscot River. *The Presumpscot River Watch Guide to the Presumpscot River: Its History, Ecology, and Recreational Uses*, has been an indispensable reference for anyone interested in learning more about the rich and varied history of the river (this publication is available at local libraries).



Presumpscot River Watch training

Beginning in 1997, Presumpscot River Watch sponsored two AmeriCorps members to lead the water quality monitoring program, training dozens of volunteers for numerous years thanks for funding from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Casco Bay Estuary Partnership.

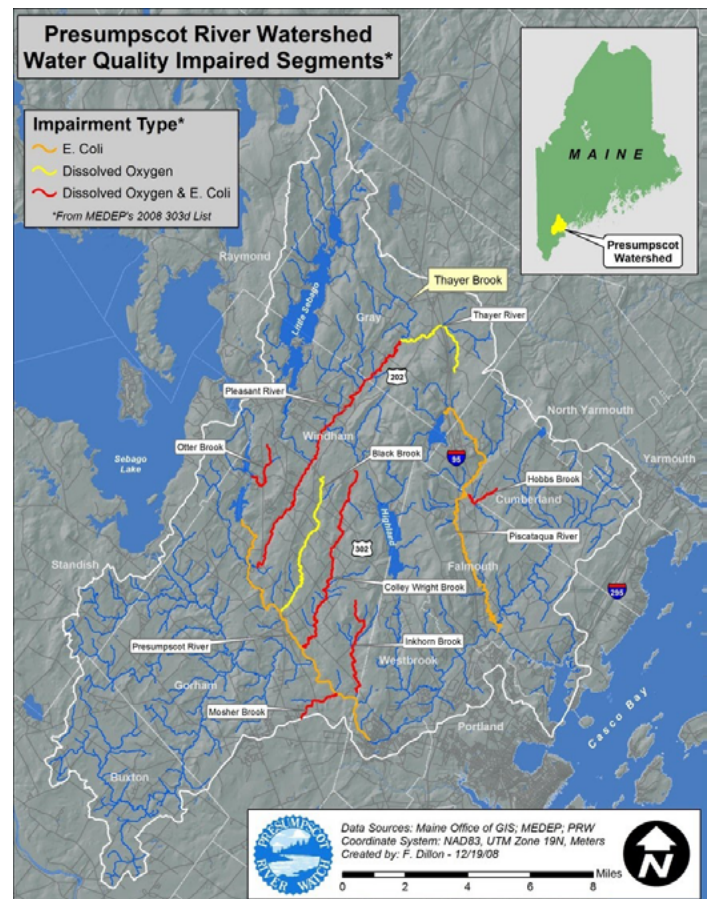
Presumpscot River Watch monitoring results have been used by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District to investigate and remediate sources of polluted runoff throughout the watershed. In 1999, an additional AmeriCorps member was appointed to teach environmental education with an emphasis on water quality in school systems throughout the Presumpscot River Watershed.

In the early 2000s, Presumpscot River Watch participated in a collaborative effort to develop a management

plan for the Presumpscot River. This document, completed in 2003 and entitled *A Plan for the Future of the Presumpscot River*, led to the implementation of many restoration efforts to improve the water quality and aquatic habitat of the river and its tributaries. It also led to the Presumpscot River Watch's collaboration with Casco Bay Estuary Partnership and other partner organizations in 2006 for a three-year project to conduct more extensive monitoring and restoration work throughout the watershed.

Since 2010, Presumpscot River Watch has been participating in the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Volunteer River Monitoring Program, which provides training, technical assistance and equipment to support volunteer water quality monitoring groups throughout the state. Participation in the program allows Presumpscot River Watch data to be used in the state of Maine water quality compliance determinations. Presumpscot River Watch's recent merger with Presumpscot Regional Land Trust will greatly enhance our joint efforts to protect and preserve the Presumpscot River and its tributaries for future generations to enjoy.

- Fred Dillon & Tamara Lee Pinard - former Presumpscot River Watch board members



Water quality condition of the Presumpscot River Watershed

Mill Brook Preserve Trails Grand Opening – Coming Soon

Our main stewardship priority this field season has been building trails at Mill Brook Preserve--that goal is now within sight with a grand opening coming soon. The Preserve consists of three miles of trail with a trail-head at Allen Knight Road (off of Methodist Road) in Westbrook. The trail is one of the longest and most beautiful hikes in the Greater Portland area.



IDEXX volunteers building trails in Mill Brook Preserve

Volunteers have been essential to the construction of this trail. A quick look at some of the numbers involved thus far gives an indication of the project's scope. About 70 volunteers have worked on the Mill Brook trail for a combined 400 hours to date this field season. They've helped build 21 bridges to cross the various streamlets and gullies leading into the brook. This fall, the Preserve will have 3 miles of trails on both sides of the brook, and we expect this to grow in the near future with numerous access points.

We can't wait to open the Preserve up to visitors of all ages in all seasons. In addition to a scenic backdrop for a hike, the Preserve offers an amazing opportunity to see



Bridge being built in Mill Brook Preserve



Porcupine seen by volunteers in Mill Brook Preserve

a wide variety of wildlife. On a given visit, you might see blue heron, bald eagles, porcupines, or one of many other bird and mammal species. From late May to early June, the waters of the brook will be swimming with alewives, migrating from the ocean back to their spawning grounds at Highland Lake. Several spots along the trail offer an up close view of this migration as the fish climb the stream rapids one by one.



Thousands of migratory alewife swimming up Mill Brook

Volunteers are still needed for the final push to be ready for the trail grand opening in just a few weeks; contact Toby Jacobs if you would like to help at toby@prlt.org. Look for the trail grand opening announcement soon. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make this trail possible. -Toby Jacobs, Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator

Mill Brook Preserve now includes Frank C. Knight Crossing

Ruth Knight of Methodist Road in Westbrook donated a trail easement across her property to Presumpscot Regional Land Trust on October 21, 2016. The trail easement will forever allow the trail along Mill Brook to connect between the land trust owned land to the north and south of her property. The trail easement will be called Frank C. Knight Crossing in memory of her late husband. "Frank loved that land along Mill Brook," Ruth said. "I am pleased that he will be remembered by users of the trails on the Crossing." The new Frank C. Knight Crossing will be dedicated in conjunction with the Mill Brook Preserve trails grand opening.

Upcoming Events

EXPLORE BLACK BROOK PRESERVE

Sunday November 13, 2016

This one-mile guided walk will be both a celebration of the new merged land trust and a great chance to experience the land that inspired the forming of the Windham Land Trust. The walk will be guided by Dennis Hawkes, a steward of the land and one of the leaders who helped protect this land.

TRAIL GRAND OPENING

December - date TBA

Join us for the official grand opening of the Mill Brook Preserve trail system. This guided walk along the brook will explore the newest built section of trail in the most remote area of the preserve.

FULL MOON SNOWSHOE

Saturday, January 14, 2017

Join us at Randall Orchards at sunset and head out to explore the 500-acres of conserved farm and forest while watching the nearly full moon rise, followed by hot cider.

LEARN TO SNOWSHOE

Saturday, February 11, 2017

Join us for a family-friendly learn-to-snowshoe program at our Hawkes Preserve. The program will be led by Marion Doyle of WinterKids. Snowshoes will be provided for all who attend.

GEOCACHING 101

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Join us at our Cummings Preserve to learn geocaching. Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices.

FROGS AND SALAMANDERS

Saturday April 29, 2017

Join us for a spring walk to see a variety of creatures living in vernal pools and other wetlands who are waking up after the long winter. This walk will be led by wetlands expert Jim Boyle of Boyle Associates.

All events are free, but space is limited, RSVP required.

To learn more about these events and RSVP go to our website www.prlt.org or call 839-4633.



Mill Brook Preserve fall preview hike



World Fish Migration Day Hike in Mill Brook Preserve May 2016

Membership Makes it Happen

Our largest source of financial support comes from people like you, our members.

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Yes, I want to support the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust today.

\$35 \$50 \$100 \$250

\$500 \$1,000 \$5,000 Other \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

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My company will match my gift

*With your new or renewing membership you will receive a free waterproof copy of *The Paddling Guide to the Presumpscot River in the mail.**

Make check payable and mail to:

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, P.O. Box 33, Gorham, Maine 04038 or donate at www.prlt.org. As a 501(c)(3), all donations to PRLT are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

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Thank You Also to the Businesses and Foundations Who Have Supported Our Work in 2016:

- Casco Bay Estuary Partnership
- Davis Conservation Foundation
- Douglas, McDaniel, Campo & Schools
- Galen Koch Videographer
- Louis Solari Real Estate Appraisals
- MCHT's Merger Fund
- MCHT's LL Bean Land Trust Grant Program
- MCF's Community Building Grant
- MCF's Fund for Maine Land Conservation
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- Westbrook Environmental Improvement Corp