

Casco Bay Currents, an email newsletter of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

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Spring 2017

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Welcome

to the Spring 2017 edition of *Casco Bay Currents*, the newsletter for the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP).

You are receiving this quarterly email newsletter because you signed up for our

newsletters in the past. If you wish to unsubscribe, please click the link at the bottom of the page.

The Alewives are Running! Volunteers Needed



The first alewife in Casco Bay waters this year was observed in **Alewife Brook** on April 26. Alewives are anadromous (sea-run) fish that spend the majority of their life at sea but return to their natal freshwaters to spawn.

CBEP and its diverse partners have funded and provided momentum over many years for revitalized anadromous fish populations in Maine's Casco Bay watershed. CBEP awarded a grant in 2016 to the **Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT)** to strengthen a volunteer alewife monitoring program that continues today. The Great Pond Alewife Run connects Casco Bay to Great Pond by way of Alewife Brook, a small coastal stream. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Alewife Brook once supported a considerable population of alewives. The 2016 monitoring results document that a relatively small river herring population continues to utilize the Alewife Brook/Great Pond system.

CELT is looking for volunteers to help with alewife monitoring in Alewife Brook again this year. They will be monitoring in the early morning through much of May. Please contact Patty at patty@capelandtrust.org if you're interested in assisting. It's a rare opportunity to spend time in this important little waterway.

From a trickle of returning fish in the early 2000s, Highland Lake (11 miles

upstream from the Presumpscot estuary) now has thousands of alewives returning annually, enhancing biological vitality in the **Presumpscot River** subwatershed. The **Presumpscot Regional Land Trust (PRLT)** is **looking for volunteers** to help count the spring fish migration in Westbrook at the Highland/Mill Brook Dam, which is typically May to mid-June. Count slots are 30-minutes long during four designated time slots each day. The USM Environmental Science and Policy Department is coordinating the project and will provide a short training for the volunteers. Volunteer fish counts are important for the Maine Department of Marine Resources and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to help estimate the total population. **Contact Karen.Wilson@maine.edu. For more information, visit the [Presumpscot Regional Land Trust page](#).**

Also, join the PRLT on two different dates, **Saturday, May 27** and **Saturday June 3**, to learn about and see alewives migrating up the Mill Brook in their annual journey from the ocean to Highland Lake. The events are free but space is limited. Visit [this page](#) for more information.



Water Quality Volunteers Also Needed



Join the **Presumpscot Regional Land Trust** to volunteer to collect water samples to help us keep the waters in our region clean. Your efforts will build on over 20 years of work by the Presumpscot River Watch (now a program of the land trust) collecting data on dissolved oxygen and bacteria throughout the Presumpscot River Watershed. These are all key indicators of the health of aquatic ecosystems for both animals and humans. The sampling season begins with a

training led by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection on Saturday, May 6th hosted by our partners the University of Southern Maine Environmental Science and Policy Department on the Gorham campus.

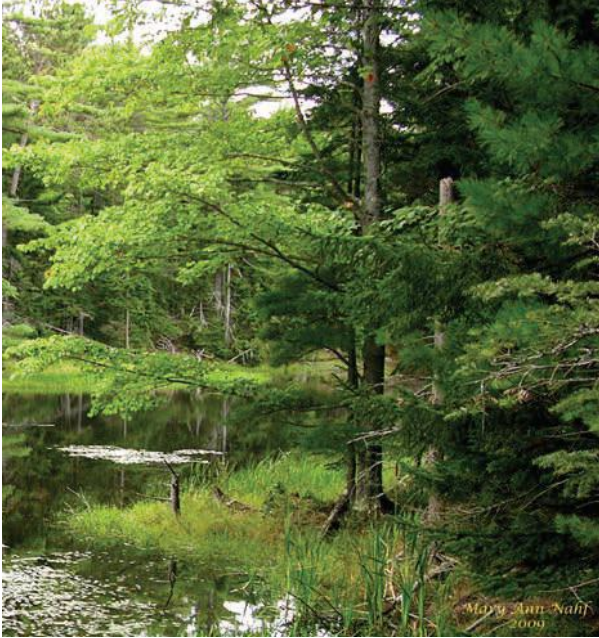
There are then 10 sampling days, every other Saturday starting in late May. Each sampling day will generally go from 7:30 – 10:30 am. We ask that volunteers be available for at least half of the sampling days, listed below:

Sat, May 20, Sat, June 3, Sat, June 17, Sat, July 1, Sat, July 15, Sat, July 29, Sat, Aug 12, Sat, Aug 26, Sat, Sep 9, Sat, Sep 23.

Go to the land trust Get Involved webpage at www.prlt.org/get-involved/ to learn more and [click here to sign-up to become a volunteer water quality monitor](#).

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator Toby Jacobs at toby@prlt.org.

Partner Profile: Harpswell Heritage Land Trust Otter Brook Preserve

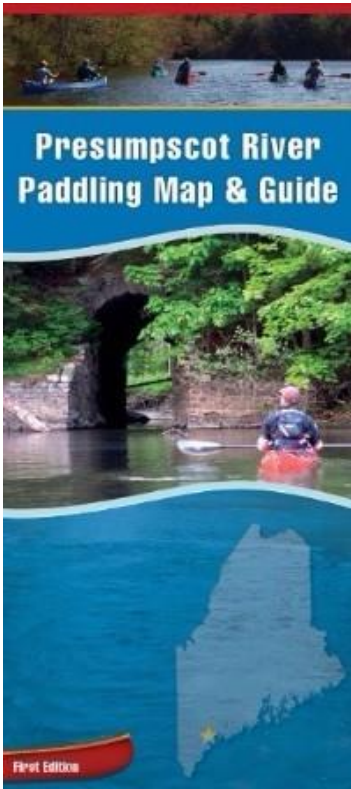


Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) completed a major fundraising project in December 2016 to create a new 71-acre Otter Brook Preserve. Funding for this project came from local individuals, small foundation grants, a \$75,000 contribution from the town of Harpswell and CBEP's Habitat Protection Fund. In total, HHLT raised \$550,000 for the project, which covered acquisition and funding to care for the property and trails in the long term.

Harpswell's Open Space Plan, adopted in 2009, identified the Otter Brook corridor as a conservation priority. The corridor contains valuable wetland and upland habitat for a variety of species of conservation concern, and Otter Brook drains into important marine habitat for shellfish and other fisheries, as well as wading birds and water fowl. Two landowners agreed to sell their properties to HHLT, and the campaign began in 2015. CBEP's ready support helped spur the momentum of the successful campaign. For more information, visit HHLT's [website](#).



Photos: Mary Ann Nahf (top), Curt Chipman (bottom).



In 2015, CBEP developed the ***Presumpscot River Paddling Map and Guide***. The *Guide* draws from the experience of local organizations, paddlers, and the 1994 *Guide to the Presumpscot River: Its History, Ecology, and Recreational Uses*.

It is a condensed, professional quality, fold up waterproof map and guide suitable for use on the water, which also provides highlights of natural, recreational, and historic features of interest, including adjacent trails.

A digital version of the guide is available at [CBEP's website](#).

CBEP also has a limited number of printed editions and can print more if there is a demand.

Around the Bay with CBEP...

The **South Portland Conservation Commission** organized the "Brooks to Bay" forum, which was held on April 26. Local conservation leaders made presentations about South Portland's streams and the health of Casco Bay, and some ideas for how to help protect and restore these resources. The Commission has organized some follow-up field trips so people can learn more about the streams in their backyards. The forum was made possible with a CBEP Community Grant.



For more information, check the Conservation Commission [Facebook page](#).



The **New Meadows Watershed Partnership**, supported by CBEP, held a forum on May 3 at the West Bath Seaside Grange. The forum topic, "Aquaculture in the New Meadows" drew a crowd of 65 to hear presentations on a variety of aquaculture topics, eat clam chowder, and discuss various issues facing the New Meadows.

To learn more about the Partnership, check their [website](#).



In a unique partnership, supported by a CBEP Community Grant, the **Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT)** provided a marine-based classroom and experiential outdoor education program for 4th grade students at Phippsburg Elementary School. In early May, the students

took a field trip to the Small Point/Hermit Island clam flat. There they learned from Phippsburg shellfish harvesters how to dig clams to take home, and planted clam seeds (young clams from a hatchery) and protected them with nets.

The shellfish harvesters will remove the nets in the fall and will then work with next year's 4th graders to dig and test the success of the seeding the following spring.



For more information, contact [KELT](#).

**Check out our new
Casco Bay Stories Website!
cascobaystories.org**



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