

Currents *Spring 2011*

Winter River Tracadie Bay Watershed Association

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ANNUALS TO WATCH FOR:

Spring Winter River Trail
Hike (June 4th, 2011)
Great Canadian Shoreline
Clean-up (Late Summer, 2011)
Volunteer Days
Watershed Yard Sale
Visit www.wintertracadie.com
for more information on
upcoming events, annuals,
and up-to-date news!

Field Work and Future Plans on the Winter River

The summer of 2010 was a great one with getting lots of work completed in terms of habitat enhancement. The team consisted of Coordinator Bruce Smith, Supervisor Chris Mutch and three very capable, energetic and committed watershed students— Danielle Lacey, Nicolle Murtagh and Luke Peters. They spent most of the summer dragging alders from the stream after Chris had cut them. The alders and other debris were removed from the water so that the stream would flow better, become narrower and deeper and carry the silt downstream. Two silt traps were dug to catch the moving sediment load. As well, the team planted about 1200 trees, mostly along agricultural riparian zones. The trees included a variety of species including red oak, yellow birch, sugar maple in the dry areas and cedar, larch and especially white ash in the wetter area.

Next summer, 2011, looks as if it will be even more active than last. We have over 10 applications in for funding for staff and materials. We hope to plant 5000 trees, primarily on the city land between Brackley Point Road and Union Road where there is little forest cover except alder, and also in the old pond basin near the headwaters as well as other riparian(stream bank) areas where the forest cover is primarily alder.

Another task will be the operation of fish traps at Officers Pond and Hardy's Pond. The most recent data was collected in 1988 and again in 1993. While monitoring fish migrating upstream does not give a total of resident fish, it does serve to compare the numbers of migrating fish from different years. The trap will be operated as early as possible in the spring, probably until mid July or whenever fish movement stops. This information will allow the development of a fisheries management plan. (next page)



Field Work and Future Plans on the Winter River (cont'd)

(Cont'd) A key task for fish habitat will be the restoration of fish passage at two highway culverts. At present there is no fish passage through a culvert on the Union Road. There is about 4 km of potential spawning ground above this site that is not accessible to fish. There is a similar situation at Donaldston. A series of rock dams, each with a small water elevation increase which fish can pass over, will be built. These dams will raise the water level so that the fish can access the culvert floor swim through the culvert.

The final big effort will be to try to open up some springs. When springs are not flowing there is not the opportunity for cold water to enter the river and trout can't access the spring. Brook trout on PEI often use springs as spawning sites as there is upwelling water which keeps the eggs from getting covered with sediment and the springs have warmer water so the eggs develop more quickly. The withdrawal of water by the City of Charlottetown has likely reduced the flow from some springs so we will try to counter this by allowing the water to flow more easily.

We also hope to develop public education initiatives in cooperation with the City of Charlottetown. The goal is to inform city residents and businesses about actions they can take to reduce their consumption of water.

Conservation Measures: What about that septic system?

Some ways you can protect your septic system and avoid problems and health risks...

The best thing you can do for your septic protection includes conserving water; identifying leaks and fixing them, shortening shower times and installing low-flow toilets and showers; not using toilets as the wastebasket; not using garbage disposals or putting coffee grounds down the drain; properly disposing household hazardous waste.

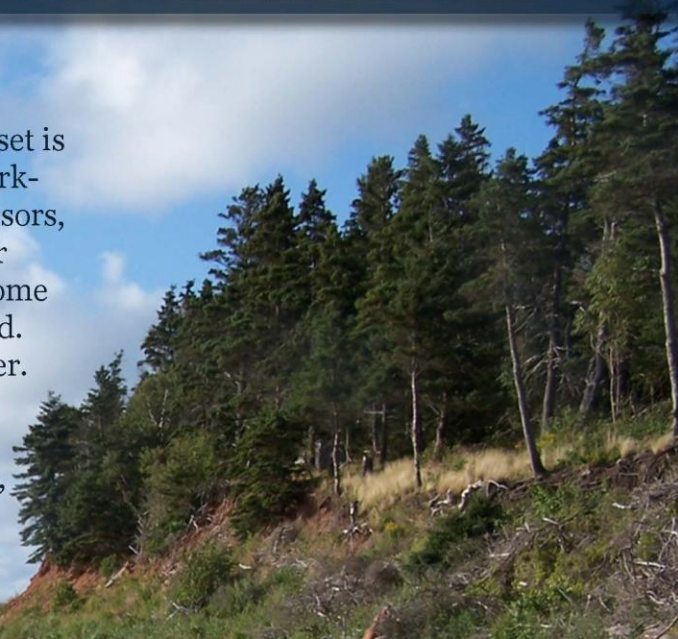
In addition, use low-phosphate dish washer/washer detergent and only wash full loads. Always minimize the use of household chemicals and cleaners. Regular system maintenance should include pumping the septic tank at least every 2-5 years (depending on family size), making sure that all solids have been removed.



Can you Contribute? There's Lots of Ways

As an association grows there will be times when a certain skill set is warranted: Newsletter designers, public relations, social networkers, interpretive skills (flora & fauna), event planners, legal advisors, urban developers, hard workers etc. Or come out for a volunteer day, an activity or to lend a hand with the work crews. We welcome all who wish to volunteer their time helping out in the watershed. We will also welcome your interest in becoming a Board Member. Contact us at c2corrigan@pei.sympatico.ca.

We really need your input for our watershed management plan, so please check the website for upcoming meetings.



The Watershed and the City

The Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed faces the usual challenges common to all watersheds on PEI. What is unique to our watershed, and is perhaps the greatest challenge to its health and well being, is the fact that since the 1930's, the Winter River basin has provided all of the water, both essential and nonessential, to meet the needs of all the residents (now 32,000) of the City of Charlottetown, as well as its industrial users, schools, hospitals, gyms, university, college, hotels, motels, fire department, malls, etc. Currently 4.2 million gallons a day are pumped into the City. The question is, how much water consumption is too much for the Winter River Basin?

The City's growing demand for water had led them to search out new sources in other watersheds, since ours is now operating at close to capacity. While it is difficult to exactly determine how much water can sustainably be extracted from our water system, there are many indications that this daily demand has a significant impact. Surface water levels are often low. There have been times and areas that have actually dried up with no water flowing over the fish ladder at Hardy's Mill Pond. Water levels are also suspected to have contributed to the disappearance of salmon from the river. Residents have had trouble with water supply from their wells especially during drought years. Research has indicated many occasions where more than the recommended 50% of recharge capacity has been pumped from the river at the Brackley and Union stations.

Our relationship with the City must be a key part of our watershed planning process. Promotion of a conservation plan is paramount, and work to support the development of other water sources for the city, and to make sure all policies for sustainable water extraction are applied equally to all watersheds that supply the city, not just to new ones.. Currently the city is allowed to pump as much water as they require without restriction. We are encouraged by the city's support of our work, look forward to our continued collaboration with Ramona Doyle, the city's new water conservation officer, and welcome their development of programs to reduce water usage. We would welcome your input and feedback. See our website, www.wintertracadie.ca to contribute or contact a board member.

Historical Watershed

Old records and pictures tell an important story about life in our watershed during earlier times. Pictured here in the year 1980 is the water powered saw/grist mill which was operated by several generations of the Johnstons' family in Suffolk. It provided a valuable service to the farmers and woodlot owners of the area.

The mill is now gone and the dam has been replaced by a more modern dam which includes a fish ladder. This dam backs up the flow of water causing the pond impoundment known as Officers' Pond.

Anyone who has old pictures or records from the watershed area and is willing to share please contact a Board member.



Watershed Management Planning Gets Underway

An important part of the work of any watershed group involves developing a community based watershed management plan. Such a planning process enables us to collectively identify the issues and concerns that need our attention, to develop an overall vision for the watershed, establish guiding principles for our organization, and to determine our goals and objectives and strategies for achieving them over the coming years. Developing such a plan requires broad public education and widespread community involvement. This winter and spring, we have organized a series of public presentations and meetings to help inform all of us about the key issues and challenges facing our watershed and to provide ample opportunity

or the input of all of us who are “stakeholders” in developing a plan. This includes farmers, fishers, tourism operators, recreational users, woodlot owners, landowners, residents in general. We are also encouraging the residents, business and institutions in the City of Charlottetown to participate in this process since they are such major consumers of our water resource. Widespread public participation is the best way for us to develop a plan that truly reflects the issues and concerns of our community, and help us have the healthy and sustainable watershed where we would all like to live. Please come out and participate. For more information about the meetings, see our website at www.wintertracadie.ca

Upcoming Events

For the most up-to-date information on events and annuals, visit www.wintertracadie.ca for dates and time of upcoming special events!

Wednesday April 6th 7:00-9:00 at Grand Tracadie School. Allie MacLennan, Wetland and Impoundments Coordinator Jonathan Platts, of Ducks Unlimited, will speak about important role of wetlands in the watershed and effects that impoundments have on wildlife.

Wednesday April 20th 7:00-9:00 at Corran Ban Hall. As part of the Annual General Meeting Erin Taylor will speak on Climate Change impacts on watersheds, and Michael Montigny, Forestry Branch will discuss more specific impacts on the woodland and wildlife.

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Many thanks to all our helpers for their continual support and hard work!

Our Land, Our Water Source

As rainwater flows over the ground it collects oil and other pollutants, sand, salt (in winter), lawn clippings, fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals that have settled onto the ground. Best management practices have been developed for agriculture operations, forestry, residential developments and individual backyards. All sectors can make substantial contributions toward watercourse protection, wildlife habitat, biodiversity enhancement and other types of environmental concerns. These are the types of topics that should show up in a Watershed Management Plan. Please come out and participate.

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