

Merrymeeting News

February 1992
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My Dear Friends,

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been stopped several times by people obviously from out of town. The question they have asked was always the same, "How do you get to this or that smelt camp?"

After I answered, I watched some of them stop at the local market and get their supplies for the day of fishing. One vehicle was on its way out and asked for directions to the nearest redemption center, luckily there was one close at hand because their vehicle was jam-packed with empties. Hopefully they bought all those beverages locally.

Do you get my point yet? Economic stimulation brought about by a healthy fishery. What would the economic gain be if we had a major recreational salmon, bass, or shad fishery? Tremendous!

Wouldn't you rather see this kind of economic development than more mills or factories? Tourism certainly brings its share of problems, but I believe they are relatively benign compared to heavy industry.

So for lunch this day, I will enjoy my home pickled smelt and think of the Bay not only romantically, but also as an economic resource.

Yours on the Bay,

Kurt

*P.S. For my recipe, please, a dollar to:
FOMB, P.O. Box 233, Richmond, ME 04357
The dollar will defray mailing costs and the rest goes to FOMB.*



Swan Island Tour: Enjoyable and Educational...

The early morning hours of October 26th brought unseasonably mild temperatures and dense fog. While it was encouraging to see the thermometer hovering around the fifty degree mark, the fog did not auger well for the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay Swan Island tour, coordinated by the Swan Island Committee. As a gray blanket swirled over the Kennebec River, Swan Island Resident Wildlife Biologist, Rusty Dyke, met the band of fifteen who had showed-up for the tour at the Richmond dock with sandwiches, homemade muffins, donuts and thermoses of coffee and the group was quickly whisked across the water to the island landing.

After getting settled in the rear of the tour truck, the visitors were given an overview of the history of the island by Dyke, as well as a synopsis of previous funding difficulties and a prediction that Swan Island's financial woes were not over. As Rusty spoke, the fog began to thin and by the time the truck was grinding up the hill leading from the dock, the visibility had improved greatly. As the truck approached the open fields surrounding what is known as the Reed House, the first cry of, "There's one!" rang out and not one but four deer bounded across the meadows and then stopped just inside the tree line to take a look at this group of humans who had interrupted their breakfast. The truck then wound its way past the Pries-Blen House where Rusty lives with his wife, Pam, and their black Labrador, Kaya. The size of the household will be increased in a few months as Pam is expecting their first child to be born in March.

As the tour group continued on the road, one of its members, Wilbur Cooper of Richmond and a member of the Swan Island Committee, entertained the others with some of his memories gained through the years from his close association with both Big and Little Swan Islands. As the truck approached the campground containing the Adirondack shelters, two more white tails were seen bobbing into the woods and it appeared that it was going to be a good morning for deer viewing. After passing the historic Dumaresq, or Salt Box House, the group travelled past the Curtis Cemetery and on to sections of the island where wide fields slope down to the river and several deer were seen grazing as well as leaping across the road in front of the truck. A little further along, everyone was treated to the sight of four wild turkeys strutting toward the woods in perfect formation. Deer sightings continued, including two large bucks with magnificent curving antlers which brought "oohs" and "aahs" from the viewers. Some members of the group attempted to count the number of deer seen, but gave up after reaching a count of between thirty-five and forty, as there were just too many to count accurately. After being thanked for the great wildlife show, Rusty said that he had been working with them for two weeks and had checked with the deer and turkeys at 5:30 that morning to make sure they were ready to perform well for the members of FOMB!

The tour continued past old farm houses, former eagle nesting sites and human-made fresh-water ponds to the southern tip of the island overlooking Merrymeeting Bay and surrounded by beds of wild rice - a valuable food source for migrating waterfowl. On the return trip, the truck stopped at the campground for about half an hour, and tour members had the opportunity to explore the island on their own. Rusty then picked everyone up and drove back to the Swan Island dock, then ferried the group back to Richmond. As good-byes were being said in the parking lot, it was apparent that new friendships had been made that morning, both between individuals and between the people and the wonderful piece of land in the Kennebec River that is known as Swan Island.

This article was contributed by Bob Greeley.

First Grant Monies Awarded to FMOB...

Congratulations to FOMB and special thanks to Nancy Churchill for successfully writing our first grant. FOMB has been awarded \$5,000 from the Patten Corporation Settlement Fund. We competed against fifty-nine other non-profit organizations and we were among the group of only fifteen that were actually awarded money. Even more impressive is the fact that we received the highest dollar amount. The money will be used to "develop and implement a protection strategy for Merrymeeting Bay, the largest inland estuary north of Chesapeake Bay". Specifically, we will use this money to inventory the property owners whose land abuts the Bay, and start informing them about the issues easements, and land trusts.



MISSION STATEMENT & LONG TERM GOALS.....

The following are the proposed Mission Statement and Long Term Goals for FOMB which need to be approved by the general membership at our next meeting which will be scheduled in April.

The Mission of the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay shall be to act for the preservation, protection and improvement of the natural ecosystems of the Bay.

The boundary for the Bay is defined as all fresh tidal rivers above Thorne's Head.

Our long-range goals:

1) Liaison with such agencies and organizations as:

- Federal
- State
- Conservation Groups
- Public and Private Organizations
- Towns and Cities

2) To develop an effective and efficient administration structure in support of our mission

3) To work for the continuing improvement of the water quality of the Bay

4) Land Use

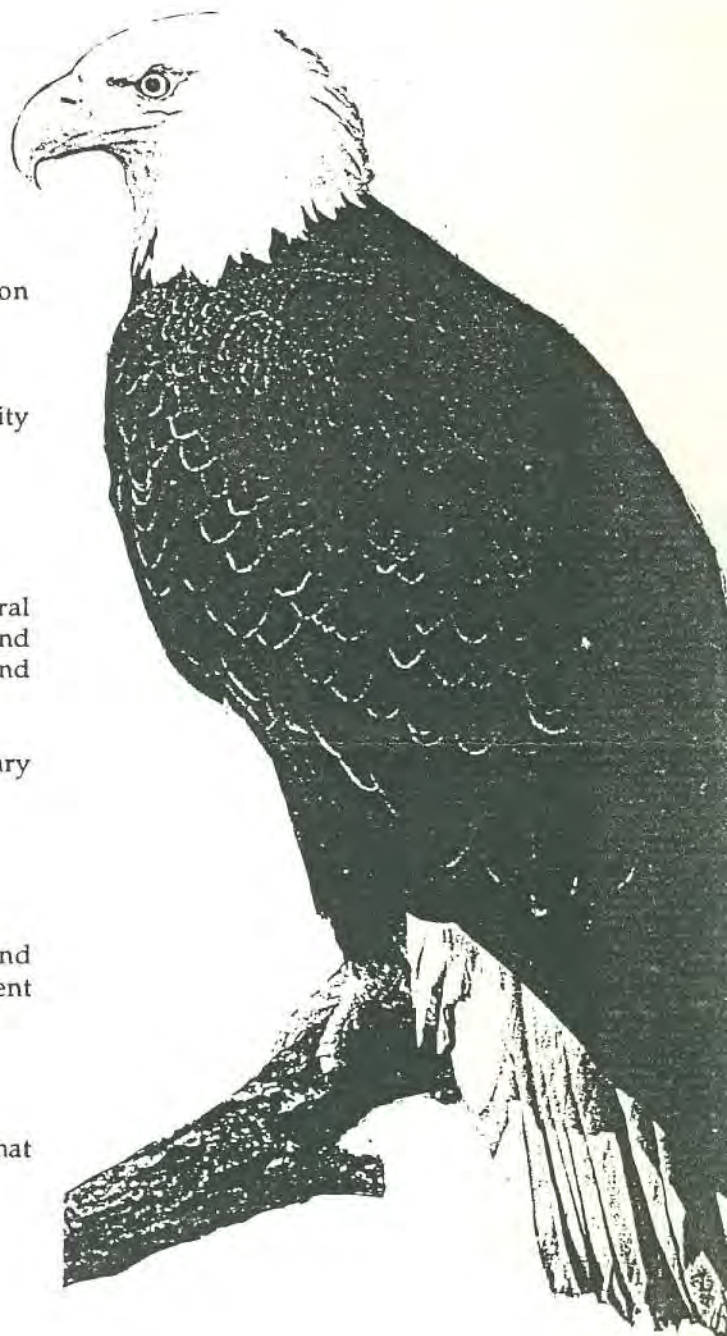
- To encourage municipalities, State and Federal governments in the watershed area to adopt land use policies for the preservation, protection and improvement of the natural ecosystems
- Work with private property owners for voluntary measures for the protection of the Bay

5) Wildlife and Fisheries

- To improve the habitat for the fisheries and wildlife populations in and immediately adjacent to the Bay

6) Education

- To encourage a broad-base education program that supports the mission



Swan Island Update...

The new State Fiscal Year is coming up shortly and of course, the economy has not gotten any better. My sources tell me that once again the funding for the personnel on Swan Island is in jeopardy. So do we face another crisis, or is it an opportunity? We need volunteers for the Swan Island Committee to work on a long-term solution to this problem. Please help!

Water Quality Monitoring Forum...

The State Extension Agency organized a half-day meeting for all private and state people in the Merrymeeting area. The purpose was specifically for the players in this arena to meet each other and to begin the process of instituting a comprehensive water quality monitoring program. FOMB is setting a goal of starting some type of monitoring program on the Bay by this summer. See you out there!

Merrymeeting Greens...

Yours truly was invited by the local chapter of this international political party to come to their meeting on January 12th and share with their members what our purpose in life is. I tried to convey the importance of our particular body of water and spoke about some of the issues we have been involved in. Reaching out to other concerned organizations in our area is very important and the Steering Committee members will do more and more of this.

Brunswick Naval Air Station Issue...

The Steering Committee met with Lcdr. L'Abbe, USN, of the Brunswick Naval Air Station at our January meeting. Through extensive testing, the Navy has determined that contaminants from some of their old dumps are migrating through the ground and are contaminating the Base. The plan is to pump the ground water out, sanitize it and then dispose of it through the Brunswick Sewage Treatment Plant, eventually dumping it into the Androscoggin River. Whoa! What's this? Why take water out of one watershed and dump it into another? Will the sludge be safe to spread?

Thanks to Ed Benedikt and Ed Laine, both on the Steering Committee, for getting FOMB involved in this issue. Furthermore, the general membership can rest assured that both Ed's will follow-up with the Base people on this problem and we'll keep you informed.

Bigelow Labs Update...

Once again I have been asking Peter Larson, Research Head for KARE, about results of his research. Late last autumn, Peter sampled forty sites which included three sites on the Kennebec. Testing for trace metals such as chromium, cadmium, lead, zinc, tin, nickel and grain size, the preliminary results indicated an interesting trend. As explained to me by Peter, all of the listed metals were found to be at an elevated level, and the source seems to be upstream of Cross Point in Bowdoinham, which was the most northerly location tested. By the way, the cost of just this one series of tests was about \$20,000. I realize that amount is pocket change for some people, but for most of us, it is a sizeable sum. So, if you can contribute to further the research, please donate to The Kennebec Area Research Endowment. Call me for particulars! 737-2707

Edwards Dam Issue...

It came to the attention of the Steering Committee that the Edwards Dam in Augusta, which causes the head of tide to be there, is scheduled to be relicensed in 1993. In conjunction with this, the State Planning Office published a draft of a report on the management of the Kennebec River. We were educated on this issue by Steve Brooke from the Kennebec Coalition. Mr. Brooke came to our December meeting and with the aid of his slide show, pointed out that the hydropower facility at the dam only produce 3.5mw of power, which is a small percentage of the hydropower picture. The dam impedes passage of anadromous fish to their historical spawning grounds. Fish such as Striped Bass, Atlantic Sturgeon, Short-Nose Sturgeon, Rainbow Smelt, Shad, Salmon, and Alewives cannot now pass above Edwards Dam to spawn.

Based on this information, and the feeling of the Committee that the fish population would dramatically increase if allowed access to their historical spawning grounds, we wrote letters to the Governor and the State Planning Office that FOMB favors the removal of the Edwards Dam. Please contact your legislators on this issue.

Committee Memberships

FOMB, I am happy to say, is now ready to get serious! There is lots of work to do and I know we can use your expertise. FOMB wants you to participate.

We have several committees that need to expand and are searching for active volunteers.

- Fundraising and Membership
- Research Coordination
- Water Quality
- Land Trust/Conservation Easements
- Comprehensive Plan/Plan Board/Land Use
- Swan Island

If you can spare the time and really feel guilty about using the Bay and not giving anything back to her, call me at 737-2707, and I will put you in touch with the chairperson for your committee interest.

General Membership Meeting...

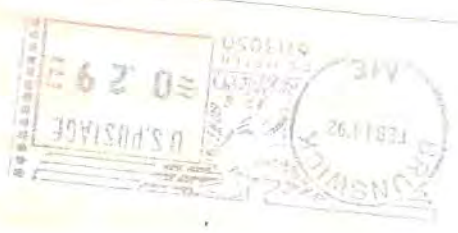
As promised at our last meeting in August, the Steering Committee has done almost all the work assigned to it and would like to present the results. We still need to finish revising the bylaws, and that should be done by April. A specific date will be set at our next meeting and all members will be contacted.

In Conclusion...

It took awhile for us to get started, but started we have. My hope is that all future newsletters will be this jam-packed with meaty issues!

FOMB was selected as the recipient of contributions made in the memory of Joel W. Marsh. Mr. Marsh was employed by the State Forest Service and had, at one time, resided on Swan Island. We wish to thank his family for thinking of our organization in their difficult time.

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