

Merrymeeting News

January 1993
Volume 3 • No. 1

Dear Members,

As Chairman, I'd like to bring you up-to-date. First, let me apologize for the long hiatus between newsletters. It's not due to lack of interest. Quite the contrary, everyone has been so busy on projects related to FOMB and Merrymeeting Bay that it's been difficult to find time to put pen to paper.

You'll see in the newsletter reports from Steering Committee members and committees. We've started to grasp some of the tasks ahead of us and get more intimately involved with the challenges ahead. For instance, we accepted our **first two conservation easements** this summer, a major step forward for an organization that has only been reactivated for slightly more than a year. The **Fish and Wildlife Committee** has been busy counting fish and waterfowl and looking at ways to improve the stands of wild rice. The **Water Quality Committee** has been gathering information on a wide variety of issues, and reviewing proposed hazardous waste cleanup plans at Brunswick Naval Air Station, as well as the proposed changes in dioxin standards.

From an organizational standpoint, we've attended several special events, such as Bath Heritage Days, in an effort to get the word out. On another note, many of you might have received a letter from us, as did 5,000 property owners in Dresden, Bowdoinham, Woolwich and Richmond. This mailing is a first step in building awareness in the area about FOMB and how we plan to preserve, protect and improve Merrymeeting Bay.

We've had some new Steering Committee membership. Kurt Rauscher, Ed Laine and Bob Lenna all left us, with deep regrets on both sides. They will be sorely missed. New Steering Committee members include Don Gleason and Tim Nason of Dresden, and Steve Pelletier of Richmond.

We are growing, changing and becoming. I'd like to thank every one of you for your support and interest. And, I'd like to encourage you to get involved. From the small act of enlisting another member, to the larger one of serving on a working committee, there's a place for each of YOU to participate.

I look forward to a busy winter and to meeting more of you as we take on the many challenges ahead.

Yours on the Bay,

Nancy Churchill



• A Trip to Sturgeon Island •

My Dear Friends,

There is a famous photograph of a gentleman named Kenneth Edgecomb cleaning a gigantic sturgeon on the aptly named Sturgeon Island just off West Chop Point. It was high time to do some more exploration of the Bay, so when I could finally steal a few days away from other responsibilities, my obvious destination was this historic and oft-visited island.

The first night I spend aboard a boat I'm always restless. It is not that I worry about it sinking or some other catastrophe; I think it is the childlike excitement of a long-awaited adventure. I was to go alone on this trip due to other commitments of my usual companions and crew, namely my family. Late Thursday evening, I brought my 23' sloop alongside the dock and commenced loading it for the trip. I'm sure the people relaxing on the beautiful Richmond waterfront thought I was heading out for a six months' journey across the Atlantic, according to the amount of provisions I put aboard, but having finally loaded I motored back to the mooring to spend the night.

The tide was on its way out very early the next morning and, for me, daybreak is the proper time to rise on the boat and start the day. As quietly as I could, I started the small outboard motor, slipped the mooring line off the bow, and with a hot, steaming cup of tea in my hand, I stole out of the harbor. The boat and I were alone and not in a hurry, which is ever so important to an enjoyable time afloat.

As I approached what I call the shooting range, which is just north of Pork Point, a fish jumped about 100 yards ahead of me. Ordinary enough you say, but from that distance, I could see it was not just a fish, but a granddaddy of a fish. Such a splash it made! Maybe it was one of those keeper-size stripers which would make it well over 36 inches, or even more intriguing, was it possible it may have been a sturgeon?

From then on, I kept a keen lookout for any other monsters of the deep that would be kind enough to provide me with more entertainment, but none offered to make their debut. But what did jump up and hit me in the face as the boat drifted with the current past the skeet club, was the realization that this shooting club had been there a very long time, and that the range was apparently over the Bay. Which can only mean there must be a large amount of lead at the bottom of the water at this particular point. This might be a contributing factor to the heavy metal pollution in the water. A sample should be taken to find out.

There must be other sites on the bay that would have been historic polluters. If only we had someone to follow-up on these matters of local knowledge. We should hire a baykeeper to research areas like this.

My, but we do digress! My boat and I finally made it to Sturgeon Island. I was surprised to find it a very small piece of real estate: I was also surprised to feel an overwhelming sense of history, mainly because of the picture referred to above. The island is very close to West Chop Point, and I imagine at low tide access is pretty easy; even so, there was not too much trash around. I picked-up what I could.

The Maine Island Trail Association urges its members to adopt and maintain an island. Maybe you, my friends of the Bay, could do the same when you find yourself on its lovely shores and waters.

Yours on the Bay, Kurt

Kurt Rauscher resigned as chairman of FOMB this summer due to personal reasons. We'll all miss his leadership and dedication. We wish him many happy hours on the bay, and thank him for all his efforts on behalf of the Bay.

• Will Paper Industry Rule Sneak in the Back Door? •

At their Augusta meeting, Wednesday, August 26th, the Maine Board of Environmental Protection (BEP) will decide whether to go forward and schedule a public hearing on a proposed rule that would weaken the current water-quality standard for dioxin 50-fold.

Despite unanimous opposition by all knowledgeable public health and environmental experts at Maine's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Department of Human Services (DHS), the rulemaking is on the docket because it is being pushed by paper industry and the Governor's office.

On Wednesday, Natural Resources Council of Maine will ask the board to refuse to consider this rule at this time. In a letter to the Board, Kreisman said, "Because of a series of unusual and troubling circumstances surrounding this proposed dioxin rule, NRCM is asking the Board to exercise its independent authority by refusing to post his dioxin rule at this time."

Statement presented to Maine Board of Environmental Protection - November 6, 1992:

My name is Thomas Cole. I am a member of "Friends of Merrymeeting Bay" which is an organization with approximately 200 members from towns and cities bordering Merrymeeting Bay and its watershed. We oppose any weakening of standards controlling the introduction of dioxin into the waters of the Merrymeeting Bay watershed.

From an NRCM News Advisory

• The Proposed Pittston Nuclear Waste Facility •

FMOB received the following letter in October from PROLAND...

Pittston, Maine has become one of the top three sites under consideration for a nuclear waste facility. Out of 440 acres, only about seventeen are dry -- the rest are wetlands; brooks, swamps, beaver bogs. One proposed location is near the head of a brook that drains directly into the Eastern River. There is no man-made structure that can outlast the life of the radioactivity it contains. And our current technology cannot even last twenty years, as evidenced by the three sites (all under twenty years old) that are leaking in the United States now. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has rejected the building proposed by the University of Maine team of engineers.

We feel the impact of a leak will be far-reaching; not only for the Eastern River, but also the Kennebec and Merrymeeting Bay. It will be quite an upset to the ecosystems from Pittston to Bath. We ask that you consider writing, and encouraging your friends to write, your local representative and senator to voice your concern over locating this toxic waste in Pittston. The water table is too high, the site is between two rivers, it is just too wet!

We could also use your financial support. For a donation of \$10.00, we would mail you a T-shirt with a silhouette of a Main woodlands scene saying: "Don't Waste Maine's Future". They are available in L/XL raspberry, green and gray and L only in turquoise. For further information or to order a shirt, please contact: Vicki Clough Kelley (RFD 4, Box 6225/Gardiner, Maine 04345/207-582-7042).

• Brunswick Naval Air Station Clean-Up: Standards Proposed •

To: Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Code 1821 JS, Philadelphia PA, Attn: Jim Shafer
 Re: Brunswick Naval Air Station Waste Site Clean-Up Commentary (Due 10/31/1992)

FOMB has reviewed the ROD [Record of Decision] Plans for Sites 1, 3 and the Eastern Plume and your answers to previous comments on water quality standards as they apply to aquatic plants and animals. We maintain that your previous response specifying EPA drinking water criteria as a treatment criteria is inadequate to protect aquatic life. We understand that the subject has come up at Technical Review Committee meetings where verbal assurances were given that the proper criteria will be applied when more detailed plans are developed. We do not agree that any useful purpose is being served by delay in establishing aquatic life discharge criteria. Such criteria should be clearly established prior to discussions of alternative water treatment and discharge schemes. We request that the enclosed treatment standards be incorporated in the ROD.

Edmund E. Benedikt, Secretary, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay

Monitoring Elements:	Minimum Clean-Up Level:	Rationale (source of data):
Arsenic	5	1
Vinyl chloride	0.15	2
Methylene chloride	4.7	7
Chromium (total)	0.06	7
Lead	0.9	6
Nickel	0.04	7
Zinc	0.03	6
Mercury	0.03	7
1,1-DCE	6	4
1,1-DCA	5	2
1,1,1-TCA	200	2,3
1,2-DCE (cis)	70	2,3
1,2-DCE (trans)	100	2,3
Asbestos	10	5
PCE	0.8	2
TCE	2.7	2
Alcohol	data unavailable	
PCB	0.014	7
2-Butanone	data unavailable	
Xylene	0.8	8
DDD	0.01	8
DDE	0.0006	7
DDT	0.012	8
Cyanide	1	7
Oil	0.01	7
Solvents	data unavailable	
pH	6-8.5	2
Oxygen	>7ppm	2
temperature	ambient	2

- Sources for rationale:**
1. U of Maine Co-op. Ext. Service
 2. State of Maine recommended levels
 3. MCL (EPA)
 4. Current levels shall not be exceeded
 5. MCLG (EPA)
 6. ISBN 0 521 22495 (Pg. 291, based on application factor for fish)
 7. EPA Region IV, Toxic Substance Spreadsheet data as modified by the State of Maine
 8. Handbook of Acute Toxicity of Chemicals. Dept of the Interior (Modified for chronic criteria)

Copy to: Brunswick Area Citizens for a Safe Environment, S. Feffer - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Mark Hyland - Maine State DEP, Walter Foster - Maine State DMR, Hon. Charlene Rydell, Hon. J. Reed Coles, Friends of Casco Bay

• Campsites Should Be Developed •

The natural beauty of the bay is being appreciated; perhaps too much so from the appearance of the more favorite campsites located on islands and areas accessible by canoes and small boats. Perhaps those who have enjoyed these spots fail to realize that this property is private and its use is permitted only by the generosity of its owners or their inability to patrol those locations. Must public access be lost due to public negligence?

I can recall at least three islands being burned over due to carelessness. When campers encounter a messy campsite, chances are that they contribute to rather than alleviate the condition. What may appear a great spot to camp may endanger wildlife or fauna as well as distress the owner of the property. Do the members of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay wish to address this situation?

I propose that we establish a few appropriate campsites and develop them according to the wishes of the owners of those properties. It shall be our duty to insure that they are properly maintained and made attractive and safe. Our guidance enhances the use of the bay and protects the environment for those so generous to permit the public to share this treasure.

Joe Trafton, Pleasant Point, Topsham, 207-729-1734

• Rural Trails Network •

Maine's Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Recreation will soon be appointing an advisory committee to assist in the State's administration of the Symms National Recreational Trails Act (SNRTA), usually referred to as the Symms Act after its sponsor, Senator Steve Symms of Idaho. The committee will be involved in decisions affecting the operation of the new program which will funnel Maine's share of up to \$30 million a year into development and maintenance of recreational trails on public land.

The Symms Act (authorized by Congress this year) designates as much as \$180 million over the next six years for improvements to the nation's trails systems.

An FOMB member has been submitted as nominee to the Advisory Committee with the hopes that we will be able to encourage the development of regional trail networks, particularly a trail network in the Merrymeeting Bay area.

• Property Protection Update •

The Property Protection committee has been hard at work since the last newsletter. We accepted both our first and second easements during this time. You won't have heard about these easements quite yet because we have some finish-up work to do before we announce them to the press.

The first easement, is a parcel on Pleasant Point in Topsham. While the parcel is small, almost ten acres, it also has almost half-mile of road frontage, and abuts a large State of Maine natural area as well as two wetlands. And, to boot, it's on the floodplain of the Muddy River. Since Pleasant Point is an area under great development pressure, we are particularly grateful that Joe Trafton, one of our Steering Committee members, had the foresight to donate this easement to the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay.

The second easement is nearly eighteen acres of conservation land in Richmond. Part of the Meadowridge development; this cluster development provides for low to moderate income housing while preserving a four-acre common site as well as thirteen acres of open pasture which runs along Baker Brook. The additional acreage is comprised of common land. The attraction of this easement is that aside from protecting Baker Brook, whose water flow into Merrymeeting Bay by way of the Abbagadasset River, the parcel is on the fringe of Richmond village. This helps to preserve the rural character of the village, and also has the potential of serving as a recreational and educational site. We are grateful to Jim Davis of Meadowbrook Homes for the donation of this easement, and for the accompanying \$2,500 donation to the Stewardship Fund.

Other hot spots of activity appear to be the Eastern River and Abbagadasset River. Property owners along both rivers have expressed an interest in creating a greenway. We are particularly excited about the Eastern River prospects because the Eastern appears to be the primary source of young fish which stock Merrymeeting Bay. We're hoping to have a meeting of all interested individuals in November/December regarding both these greenways. Keep your eyes on the community boards in both these towns for further information.

• Families or Individuals Needed to "Adopt" Land •

Have you thought that you'd like to get more involved in FOMB but just didn't want to tie yourself down? We have the opportunity for you or your family. Each parcel or conservation easement that is donated to FOMB needs a "family" or "parent". It's an important job. You'll need to get familiar with your property. This means taking pictures, writing notes, and filling out an information sheet about it. You may need to develop a working relationship with the owner to ensure the terms of the easement are met. The Stewardship Committee will train and assist you. The rewards will be a special tie with land in perpetual trust. Please call Nancy Churchill (737-2005) or Joe Trafton (729-1734) for further information.

• Do You Watch Wildlife? •

The Friends of Merrymeeting Bay are looking for volunteers who enjoy watching wildlife on and around the bay and its tributaries to contact Marilyn Cole at 443-4431 (days). We would like to form a ring of volunteers around the bay of people who will take the time to note the species seen, the date it was seen, so we can compile a list of the wildlife that exists in the area.

Spring and Summer Sightings:

A cold spring may have been the reason for a very small alewife run, which started mid-April and went through late May.

The state stocked 6,000 tagged salmon, 8" inches in length in the Androscoggin River. Their biggest trouble with survival may be the cormorants (shags), which consume all kinds of smaller fish.

Striped bass started showing-up in June and have been here all summer. Live bait can't be used before July 1; you may keep one fish per day of at least 36" in length.

The ducks started showing-up in mid-August; lots of blacks and mallards, but very few teal. The bluewings will come and go way before the greenwings, because they can't stand the cold. The ducks that come into the bay this fall will surely find a very good rice crop to feed on.

Harold Nickerson (729-4011)

October and November Sightings:

The winter birds have returned in force with the juncos, chickadees, nuthatches abounding the areas. There are still robins feeding on the berries and a moose was seen on West Chop point. There have been ducks and geese in greater number than in past years and in spite of the hunters, they have remained.

Marilyn Cole

• FOMB at Bath Heritage Days •

I partook of my first special event as chairperson of that Committee on the 4th of July weekend at Bath Heritage Days. What seemed like an impossible task of the beginning really turned out to be a fun experience - thanks to many people who helped.

Let me thank Becky Koulouris and John Wright from Bowdoin College who provided all the display posters giving written, pictorial and graphic information about the bay. Thanks also to the students of the Environmental Studies Program who gave us t-shirts to sell with FOMB keeping the profits. Plus, John gave us a whole day of the booth on July 5th. Thank you all.

Nancy Randolph also deserves a "thank you". Just two days before the Festival, I received the handout material that needed to be copied. Thanks to Nancy, it was printed and looked terrific.

Thanks to all the helpers who set-up and took charge throughout the three days: Tad Hunter, Nancy Churchill, Tom and Marilyn Cole, Bill Maier, Betty King, Bob Dale and Ed Benedikt, and, of course, John Wright - THANK YOU!

Friday was the best day - bright and sunny and lots of people. Saturday the 4th was not as good - for obvious reasons, but we were there and Sunday was a bit better. Made all our expenses plus a little money for the savings account.

Overall, it was a learning experience for all of us, I think. We gave information out to many people from Maine and "away". Many challenged us with questions about the uniqueness of Merrymeeting Bay. Unfortunately, there are a few people who do not know a thing about Merrymeeting Bay.

Jean Parker

• Special Events Calendar •

FOMB is hoping to participate in the following events during 1993. Volunteers will be needed for all of them. Please call Jean Parker at 443-0982 (after March 31st) if you can help.

- July 3, 4, 5: Bath Heritage Days
- July 26 to August 1: Richmond Days
- 1st week in August: Topsham Fair
- Mid-September: "Discover Us Fair" in Brunswick
- Mid-September: Common Ground Fair
- Mid-October: Coastal Clean-up



• A Merrymeeting Bay Map •

The FOMB Steering Committee has formed a small group to work with Janet Parker, a mapmaker at DeLorme Publishing in Freeport, to produce a "definitive" map of the Merrymeeting Bay area. Since, to our knowledge, there is currently no single map of the entire Bay, we thought a map would be useful to FOMB members and be a fund-raising tool. Our intention is that map be of very high-quality and include as much information as possible. Please call Tim Nason 737-4282 (days) if you would like to join the "Map Committee."

• Informational Get Togethers Planned •

Through 1993, FOMB will be hosting a number of informational meetings throughout the Merrymeeting Bay area. The first one will be held in Dresden (time and place to be announced). Several highly-qualified speakers will discuss the ecology of Merrymeeting Bay and its tributaries, the benefits and "how-to's" of conservation easements, and a description of the goals of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay. Contact Tim Nason 737-4282 (days) or Don Gleason 737-2817 (nights) if you would be interested in working to organize these meetings.

• Who's Who in FOMB? •

The FOMB Steering Committee is a dedicated core group of individuals from Bath, Brunswick, Topsham, Bowdoinham and Dresden, each of whom is assigned to a particular Standing Committee. The Steering Committee members are listed below, beneath the names of the Standing Committees they serve on. If you see a committee you would like to be a part of, please call the person(s) listed; all committees need members to help accomplish the important goals FOMB has adopted.

Membership, Fund Raising & Endowment:

Bill Jewell Woolwich - 443-6520
Tad Hunter Topsham - 729-1544

Newsletter & Publicity:

Tim Nason Dresden - 737-4282
Nancy Churchill Dresden - 737-2005 Steering Committee Chair

Special Events:

Jean Parker Bath - 442-0982

Stewardship & Property Protection:

Nancy Churchill Dresden - 737-2005
Joe Trafton Topsham - 729-1734 Steering Committee Vice Chair

Water Quality Monitoring & Issues:

Ed Benedikt Brunswick - 442-0445 Steering Committee Secretary
Tulle Frazer Bath - 443-8656 Steering Committee Treasurer
Harold Nickerson Topsham - 729-4011

Wildlife/Fisheries Monitoring & Issues:

Harold Nickerson Topsham - 729-4011
Marilyn Cole Bath - 443-9675
Tom Cole Bath - 443-9675
Don Gleason Dresden - 737-2817

• Mission Statement & Long Term Goals •

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:

- Liaison with such agencies and organizations as federal, state, conservation groups, public and private organizations, towns and cities.
- To develop an effective and efficient administration structure in support of our mission.
- To work for the continuing improvement of the water quality of the Bay.
- 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 and to work with private property owners for voluntary measures for the protection of the Bay.
- Wildlife and Fisheries: To improve the habitat for the fisheries and wildlife populations in and immediately adjacent to the Bay.
- Education: To encourage a broad-base education program that supports the mission.

• Become a Friend of Merrymeeting Bay •

I enclose my tax-exempt annual dues of \$10 plus a donation of \$_____

Name_____

Phone_____

Address_____

How can we help you?

Programs on the ecology of the Bay _____

Programs on land management and low-impact farming _____

Information on conservation easements _____

Other _____

How would you like to help us?

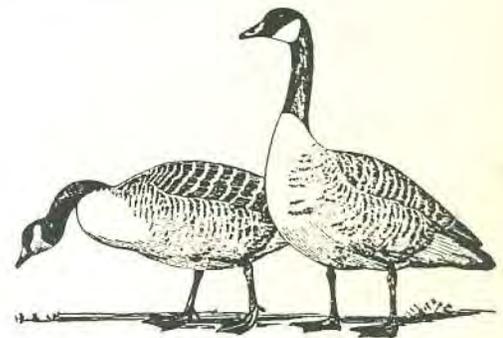
Organizing and arranging programs _____

Helping with research _____

Membership drive _____

Fundraising _____

Other _____



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