

Merrymeeting News

The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • P.O. Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357

SPRING 1997

*To Preserve, Protect
and Improve the
Natural Ecosystems
of Merrymeeting Bay.*

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Support comes from memberships, tax-deductible donations and grants.

Education

Hands Around the Bay, speaker series, field trips.

Conservation & Stewardship

Protecting traditional conservation resources through private ownership, easements and stewardship.

Membership Events

Swan Island picnic, paddle tour of the Bay, field trips, conservation meetings, potluck suppers and shoreline clean-ups.

Research and Advocacy

Water quality data collection, analysis.

1997 Steering Committee

Frank Burroughs, Bowdoinham
Dana Cary, Topsham
Ed Friedman, Bowdoinham
Tad Hunter, Topsham
Esther Lacognata, Topsham
Bob Lenna, Bowdoinham
Don and Joan Lipfert, Woolwich
Pat Maloney, Topsham
Tenley Meara, Topsham
Jay Robbins, Richmond
Karin Tilberg, Bowdoinham
Warren Whitney, Bowdoinham

Executive Director

Betsy Ham, Bowdoinham

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

SPRING CLEAN UP

We need your help to keep the Bay clean. For more information see the related article on page 6.

WHEN: Saturday, May 17 from 1:30 PM to 6 PM.

WHERE: Meet at the Bowdoinham Town Landing.



STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL FUNDRAISER

Local growers David Prout of Bowdoinham, Rob Gleason of Green Point Farm, Dresden and David Popp of Popp's Farm, Dresden have generously offered to let us hold strawberry festivals at their pick your own operations. Come join us!

WHEN: Saturday, June 28 (Rain date TBA). Time to be announced.

WHERE: Green Point Farm in Dresden and David Prout's Strawberry fields in Bowdoinham and Popp's Farm in Dresden.

EVENING PADDLE AND PICNIC

Break up the work week and join us for dinner on the Bay. Our plan is to paddle out to the Sands for dinner (bring your own). Don't have a boat? Give Betsy a call at 666-3376, she may be able to find you a ride.

WHEN: Wednesday, July 2 at 5:30 PM (weather permitting).

WHERE: In Bowdoinham. Call Betsy at 666-3376 for exact location.

SWAN ISLAND SUMMER PICNIC

Don't miss our fourth annual picnic and overnight on Swan Island.

WHEN: Saturday and Sunday, August 16 and 17. Time to be announced later.

WHERE: Meet at The Public Dock in Richmond.

RARE PLANTS MUD WALK

Join Dr. Barbara Vickery to discover the rare and unusual plants of The Bay.

WHEN: Saturday, September 6 from 9 AM - 11 AM.

WHERE: Bowdoinham Town Landing.

STANDING ROOM ONLY AT DIOXIN HEARING

TWO BILLS ON DIOXIN were discussed at an April 8th public hearing attended by an overflow crowd of nearly 300 people. During the eight hours of testimony, emotions at times ran very high but for the most part both sides agreed on the toxicity of dioxin but differed about how to deal with it. Those supporting Tom Bull's bill LD 1577, including FOMB, argued for the total elimination of dioxin discharge into Maine Rivers by eliminating chlorine used in the bleaching process at paper mills. The total elimination of chlorine is called

Totally Chlorine Free or TCF. Supporters for bill LD 1633 (sponsored by the Governor) argued in favor of an Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) process that will reduce but not eliminate dioxin discharge into Maine rivers.

The old theme of jobs vs. the environment was voiced often by the ECF Supporters of LD 1633, especially in reference to the lack of market for TCF products. FOMB testified in reply to this that TCF paper now makes up 30% of the European pulp market and, furthermore, this share

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CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, AN OPTION FOR YOU?

IF YOU ARE A LANDOWNER, with property near Merrymeeting Bay or its tributaries, and you would like to protect your land from inappropriate future development while at the same time keeping ownership, a conservation easement may be an option for you. Some questions and answers about this exciting and practical program are discussed below.

What is a Conservation Easement? A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit conservation organization or governmental entity. In the agreement the landowner agrees to transfer to the conservation organization specific landowner rights. The conservation organization agrees to hold these rights but to not use these rights and to ensure that they are not used by anyone else. Conservation easements are recorded in the County Registry of Deeds. They are intended to exist in perpetuity and apply to all future landowners of the property.

What landowner rights are usually transferred in a Conservation Easement? Most conservation easements transfer landowner rights of commercial, industrial, development and mining uses of the land. Once these rights are transferred to the conservation organization, those uses are prohibited on the easement land.

Depending on the property and its specific characteristics, other uses may also be transferred in the conservation easement such as changing the topography of the property, disturbing wildlife habitat, cutting of forested lands or interference with visual amenities. Any use not specifically prohibited in a conservation easement is permitted, although there is usually language stating that permitted uses shall be conducted in a manner consistent with the overall purpose of the conservation easement. Conservation easements are a flexible tool that can be tailored to suit each situation.

Do Conservation Easements Restrict the Ability to Sell, Will or Give Land in the Future?

A conservation easement does not interfere with the transfer of property in the future. The conservation easement will remain effective forever even as it is transferred to different landowners over time. An easement may lower the market value of property, but can have positive economic consequences as described below.

What are the Benefits of Transferring a Conservation Easement?

First, the special natural values of your property that are cherished by you and your family can be protected forever.

Second, the donation of a conservation easement may qualify as a charitable gift for federal income tax purposes and therefore may be deductible.

Third, a conservation easement can reduce the market value of the property to an extent that state and federal and gift taxes and local property taxes are reduced. If you are interested in donating a conservation easement there are materials that describe these benefits in greater detail.

How do I learn more? If the idea of a conservation easement interests you and you would like to learn more, contact FOMB • As the saying goes, "Conservation easements are forever."

*Prepared by Karin R. Tilberg, Esq.
Based in part on materials published
by Maine Coast Heritage Trust*



STANDING ROOM ONLY AT DIOXIN HEARING

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has been achieved in just 4 years. If TCF paper was manufactured in the United States and federal procurement standards favored TCF it is likely that a strong market could be found in this country as well.

Supporters of Bull's bill outlasted those of the Governor's bill in large part due to a strong attendance by members of the Penobscot Nation who have been especially hard hit by dioxin caused cancers. A particularly eloquent statement made by 24 year old Rebecca Sockbeson concluded: "You have the power, please have the courage to use it and tell paper companies that our water, our lives, are not for sale."

A very special thanks to FOMB members who attended. FOMB members should continue to express their opinions to their legislators and the press. For more information contact Ed Friedman at 666-3372.

1997 FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

DUE TO HIGH LEVELS OF PCBs AND DIOXIN there are fish consumption advisories on the Androscoggin and Kennebec. A large segment of the population should not eat certain fish species. Contact Ed Friedman at 666-3372 for the details.



SPRING 1997
VOL.7, NO 2
APRIL 1997

Merrymeeting News

is the newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, P.O. Box 233, Richmond, Maine 04357, and is published seasonally. *Merrymeeting News* is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay. For information call Betsy Ham, Bowdoinham (666-3376).

WATER QUALITY STUDY

ANNE HAYDEN has been hired by FOMB to evaluate and summarize existing water quality studies pertaining to Merrymeeting Bay. Many studies have been done on the Bay but, no source exists that summarizes and evaluates all of them. Ann's task is to bring these studies together in an annotated bibliography and data base, communicate the overall findings to the general public and finally provide a

general assessment of water quality in Merrymeeting Bay, including recommendations for research and monitoring. Ann has a great deal of experience that she will use to accomplish these tasks. She has, among other things, developed a monitoring program for the Casco Bay Estuary Program, identified threats to Maine's aquatic ecosystems for the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and coauthored a report on the Gulf of Maine.

Ann hopes to complete this project by this fall. With information gained from this study we can answer questions like these: Do we need to do more research in certain areas? Do we need to monitor water quality? By answering questions like these, Ann will aid us in shaping an overall water quality program for The Bay. This program is funded by a grant from the Davis Conservation Foundation.

- *Betsy Ham, Bowdoinham*

RE-INTRODUCING "SIGHTINGS"

SIGHTINGS IS AN EASY, fun way for members of FOMB to tally nature observations and share them with others. You are encouraged to contribute! Some of you may recall that we began a similar program in 1993 that fell by the wayside. Recently several members have suggested we bring the program back and we are doing so. Joan Lipfert has agreed to coordinate the effort.

Over the course of a year, participants mail in their observations for compilation. Participants are free to contribute as much or as little as they want. Send us a daily checklist, drop us a monthly postcard, or send us a letter once a year. Amateurs wanted! You don't have to be a scientist to participate (though scientists are welcome, too).

Sightings can include birds, plants and wild flowers, mammals, amphibians, fish, reptiles, bugs . . . Record them on postcards or on a checklist. Send us photos, if you like. Send us reminiscences of sightings in the past.

Sightings will produce information for Hands Around the Bay, press releases and feature articles about Merrymeeting Bay that will help everyone learn more about the Bay's natural resources. We will also run a "Sightings Report" in the FOMB Newsletter. If you are interested we

would be happy to host Sighting Socials to bring together Bay observers to share their experiences and identification tips. Please cut out the following postcard and use it to record your sightings. Let us know if you would like to continue to participate and if you would like more postcards such as this one or a log sheet. Feel free to use your own logs if this is more convenient but include information on what, where and when so that we can keep our sightings information consistent. For more information contact Joan Lipfert, FOMB's Sightings coordinator at 443-8751.

Do sign up and join your friends in observing the abundance of nature that surrounds us. It's Spring!

- *submitted by Joan Lipfert, Woolwich*



male
HOODED MERGANSER

SPRING SIGHTINGS

Members report seeing 11 bald eagles most immature (one on a nest), pileated woodpeckers, a woodcock and snow geese and a widgeon, gadwall, and northern shoveler.

Pleasant Point and the Muddy River, Topsham. Dana Cary, reports seeing flocks of redwing blackbirds,

Continued on page 4

SIGHTINGS LOG

WHAT

WHERE

WHEN (DATE, TIME)

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN SIGHTINGS.

PLEASE SEND ME SOME POSTCARDS OR **SIGHTINGS CHECK LISTS**

TIDINGS / SPRING

THE GREAT NATURAL EVENT of the late winter and early spring of 1997 is the Hale-Bopp comet, streaming fuzzily across the northwest sky in the first hours of darkness, and across the northeast sky shortly before dawn. Civilizations have risen and fallen since its last appearance, and will again before its next one.

Around the Bay villages of smelt shacks are established and disestablished every year. Lined up in tidy rows, they are civilizations that rise or fall on every tide, and endure, under optimal circumstances, for two months or so. Their proprietors don't have time to consider the longer cycles of astronomical events, being wholly concerned with the short-term outlook: When is the ice strong enough to sustain the camps? When is it too weak to leave them out any longer?

The answers for 1997 were not soon enough and too soon. A local operator tells me that he had a 17 day season this year. Even that was interrupted when he and his crew had to re-position the camps, because the ice had shifted gradually downstream, taking the village with it. There are other complications, as well—on a busy night, with each of the 20 or 30 camps full, there are 15 or 20 tons of weight force on the

NORTHERN
SAW-WHET OWL

ice. A rising tide then, instead of lifting the ice, may force itself up through the fissures, spread over the surface, and cause severe local flooding and emergency evacuation. I asked him if he had a siren to warn his clients of the danger. "Nah," he said, "Once that water hits the stove and she starts to sizzle, they figure it out for themselves. Most of 'em, anyway."

As I write, the ice has broken up in the main channel of the Bay. Owls have been hooting since 1 February. By mid-March, a pair of adult eagles was hanging around last year's nest, and a local gardener, who never needs such meteorological encouragement, was sorting through seed packets. Along roads, around barns, hen houses, and garbage cans, the smell of the skunk is in the air, and tomcats are on the prowl.

All of these are evidence of spring, other appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. Blackbirds have arrived; killdeer will be here any day,

and woodcock soon after that. But the geese that used to start showing up late in March, at about town-meeting time, and build into thousands as the Bay opened, are no longer the clamorous, stirring presence they once were. Many appear to have abandoned migration and settled into a sort of suburban existence in the mid-Atlantic states. For anyone who has lived around the Bay long enough to remember them, their drastic reduction is a real loss. There was something just fine about a raw, blustery April evening when it brought a tumultuous uproar of honking and braying across the water.

The natural populations of the Bay have gone through their own fluctuations, over longer and shorter cycles. Species have dwindled, and some have come back again in a way that would have seemed impossible a generation ago. Comets were once regarded as portents, signaling the collapse of old empires or the rise of new ones. Locally, we'd settle for something less grand. The smelt fishery could do with a little global cooling - an earlier freeze, a later thaw. Others of us, wishing on a star, hope this will be the year we start to see more geese again, a new returning to an old abundance.

- *Frank Burroughs, Bowdoinham*

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

STAMP
HERE

FOMB
% JOAN LIPFERT
RR 1 Box 650, RIVER RD.
WOOLWICH, ME 04579

**SPRING SIGHTINGS**

Continued from page 3
many bald eagles and a wood duck swimming around between the ice burgs on the Muddy River.

Androscoggin River,
Topsham Carol Jack spotted 2 killdeer sitting on the river ice, a flock of 200 or more blackbirds and a porcupine sunning himself up in a tree near the river.

Thwings Point, Woolwich
Joan and Don Lipfert saw a fox, raccoons, and a flock of 50 Canada geese.

FOMB WANTS YOU

FOMB IS PRIMARILY a volunteer organization. To accomplish our mission we need your help. To help us achieve our goals FOMB is forming or continuing several key committees. **The Education Committee** will be working on the continued development of the Hands Around the Bay program and the Winter Speakers Series. **The Water Quality Advisory Committee** is a technical advisory committee that will first help our consulting biologist (see article on page 3); then advise FOMB on what should be our next focus in the area of water quality. **The Conservation and Stewardship Committee** will work on conservation easements. We particularly need individuals from Richmond, Woolwich, Bath and Brunswick on this committee. **Our Membership and Outreach Committee** will be working on how to attract new members, keep old members and reach out to the membership. We need volunteers at the **Spring Cleanup** on May 17. For the **Strawberry Festival** we will need volunteers to plan for and volunteer on the day of the event. These committees and events can be a success only if you help! Call Betsy Ham at 666-3376 if you can volunteer.

MONEY MATTERS

Thank you to Vance Stephenson for serving as our Treasurer and welcome to Dana Cary, our new Treasurer.

FRIENDS OF MERRYMEETING BAY

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Frank Burroughs, 81 Wallentine Rd., Bowdoinham 04008 666-5979
- Dana Cary, 1052 Foreside Rd., Topsham 04086 *Treasurer* ... 729-4945
- Ed Friedman 42 Stevens Rd., Bowdoinham 04008 *Chairman* ... 666-3372
- Tad Hunter, Foreside Rd. Topsham 04086 729-1544
- Esther Lacognata, 19 Elm St., Topsham 04086 729-4088
- Don and Joan Lipfert, RR 1, Box 650, Woolwich 04579 443-8751
- Robert Lenna, P.O. Box 185, Bowdoinham 04008... *Vice Chairman* ... 666-8421
- Pat Maloney, 31 Bridge St., Topsham 04086 729-8941
- Tenley Meara, RR 1 Box96, Topsham 04086 725-2738
- Jay Robbins, P.O. Box 9, Richmond 04357 737-2239
- Karin Tilberg, 9 Main St., Bowdoinham 04008 666-5902
- Warren Whitney, 145 Pork Pt. Rd., Bowdoinham 04008 *Secretary* ... 666-3376

CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR:

Karin Tilberg, (see above) 666-5902

HANDS AROUND THE BAY COORDINATOR:

Pat Maloney (see above) 729-8941

SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR:

Jean Parker, Hockomock Island, RR 1 Box 1785, Woolwich 04579 443-0982

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Betsy Ham, 145 Pork Point Rd., Bowdoinham 04008 666-3376

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

- Since February 1, 1997:
- Philip Bender, *Topsham*
 - Howard & Nancy Bliss, *Brunswick*
 - Butler Head, *Bath*
 - Richard & Carol Jack, *Topsham*
 - Rupert Neily, *Hollowell*

- Maria Jackson Parker, *Brunswick*
- Ed Roberts, *Freeport*
- Richard Sperry, *Brunswick*
- Earle Warren, *Phillipsburg*

Thank you to: Clancy Cummings for editing and Josephine Mussomeli for designing this issue of MMNews.

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, P.O. Box 233, Richmond, Maine 04357

ANNUAL DUES **\$15.00**. Renewal

- \$15.00 enclosed for individual membership. \$20 Family
- \$30 Contributing \$50 Supporting \$100 Sponsoring \$250 Sustaining \$500+ Benefactor
- \$ _____ enclosed as an additional tax-deductible donation.

NAME _____
 RR# OR STREET ADDRESS _____
 TOWN / STATE/ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____

\$6.00 enclosed for a copy of ***Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Landowners.*** (\$5 for the book, \$1 for postage)

GOOD COMPANY AND GARBAGE GUARANTEED

T IRED OF TRASH on the Bay shore? Dig out your sunscreen, knee high boots, work gloves and mark your calendar! On Saturday May 17 from 1:30pm - 6pm at the Bowdoinham Town Landing join FOMB and the Western Rivers section of Maine Island Trail Association as we once again, on the last day of National River Cleanup week, swoop down and

clean the shores of our lovely Bay.

By skiff, kayak, canoe, foot and tractor we will terrorize trash while eagles soar overhead and sturgeon leap. Last year we relieved the shores of approximately 7,000 pounds of flotsam and jetsam including 2 buildings. Hopefully we will encounter somewhat less this time around. Please preregister if possible so we can get started on logistics.

- Ed Friedman, 666-3372

BEAUTIFUL CARDS OF THE BAY FOR SALE

T HE CARDS OF THE BAY, with Sally Butcher's beautiful photos on the front and a quote from author Franklin Burroughs on the back, are here! Frank and Sally are generously donating all profits from the sale of these cards to Friends of Merrymeeting Bay. A dozen cards costs \$12 and gives you a selection of six different photos; three different scenes of the Bay, a close up of a snapping turtle, ducks on the fly and flowers. They are truly beautiful! To order your cards call Betsy Ham at 666-3376.



WEB SITE

CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE for more information on the Bay <http://www.col.k12.me.us/MMB/>.

JOIN THE ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER SOURCE TO THE SEA CANOE TREK

INDIVIDUALS WILL BE CANOEING the Androscoggin River from its source at Lake Umbagog to the Sea at Popham Beach from Saturday June 28 to Wednesday July 16. Individuals are welcome to come for the whole trip or join the group for a day or weekend.

The group will be paddling on The Bay July 15. Events are planned each day of the trek. On July 16 there will be an end of trek celebration including a canoe raffle drawing. To be part of the trek or receive raffle tickets for the canoe call Bob Collins at 582-6707.



FRIENDS of MERRYMEETING BAY

P.O. Box 233 • Richmond, Maine 04357

Forwarding and address correction requested.

RE-INTRODUCING "SIGHTINGS"

See page 3

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