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Casco Bay Currents Fall 2014

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Fall 2014

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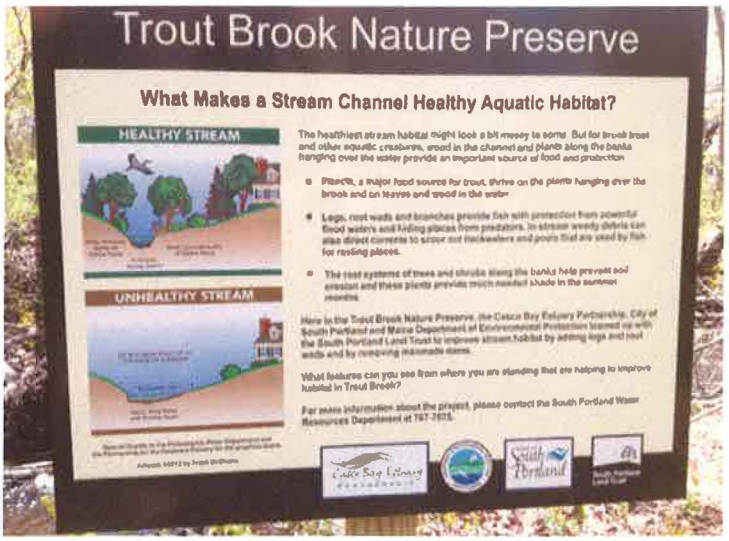
Dear ,

Welcome to the inaugural electronic edition of the *Casco Bay Currents*, the newsletter for the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP). You are receiving the first edition of this newsletter as a member of the extended Casco Bay Estuary Partnership community. **If you wish to continue receiving these newsletters please sign up here.**

Some of you may remember that *Currents* was published in paper form in the early years of the Partnership. This revived, electronic version is geared towards our Partners and anyone interested in protecting the health of Casco Bay. It is an avenue for you to tell others about your activities and accomplishments on behalf of the Bay, and learn about how members of the Casco Bay community are contributing to the health of the Bay.

We welcome your content. Please send ideas for feature stories, short updates, and listings for upcoming events (one paragraph) to **cbep@usm.maine.edu**.



Feature Story: Cleaning up an Urban Stream

Casco Bay Stories Project

This summer, CBEP launched the Casco Bay Stories project. Recent SALT graduate Galen Koch gathered audio and video documentaries, as well as photos and testimonials, from folks living, working, and playing in Casco Bay and the watershed.

Explore stories on our **website**, **Facebook** and **Twitter**! And if you have your own story to tell, share it with us!

Urban streams often end up overlooked and ignored. As residential and commercial development increases, streams are sometimes seen as more of a burden than an asset to the community. But in reality, urban streams are important for wildlife and humans. They carry water away from developed areas, provide habitat and connect people with their natural surroundings.

For several years, collaborative work has aimed to improve water quality in Trout Brook, which winds its way through Cape Elizabeth and South Portland, and eventually, into Casco Bay. Much of Trout Brook is in residential areas, and that poses challenges for the stream's water quality. Runoff from roads and lawns can bring pollution and nutrients to the stream. The nutrients can cause algae to grow, which in turn lowers the available oxygen in the water that critters need to survive.

In the early 2000s, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP) identified the stream as "impaired". Since that time the City of South Portland, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), and Maine DEP have worked with many stakeholders and neighbors to clean up the stream.

"It has been a group effort and everyone has done their part," said Kate McDonald of CCSWCD.

Multiple grant awards have supported a wide range of projects, including efforts to improve stream-side buffers, which slow down and infiltrate runoff; fix erosion problems; and engage the community.

Monitoring of Trout Brook involves both professionals and citizen scientists, including high school and college students. For example, Fred Dillon, the City of South Portland's Stormwater Coordinator, used CBEP's automated data sondes to monitor dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and temperature. Volunteers and high school students have also been involved with looking at stream insects to assess the health of the Brook.

This summer, a group of high school and college students participated in the Trout Brook Youth Conservation Corps to do hands-on work. Andrew Volent, Brandon Ledoux, Sage Waldron, AJ Romano, Caroline Gleason and team leader Ryan Messier removed invasive plants, stabilized stream banks, and planted

Beginning with Habitat & Maine's Wildlife Action Plan Revision

Photo courtesy of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIF&W) is in the process of revising the current *Wildlife Action Plan*, which must be completed by October 1, 2015. The goal of Maine's plan is to examine the health of wildlife and recommend actions to protect it, in turn protecting the State's biodiversity. The foundation of the action plan, the **Beginning with Habitat program**, involves a habitat based approach to conservation through outreach and technical assistance. This approach is essential because Maine's identity and much of its economy depends on its wildlife.

Over the past decade the Beginning with Habitat Program has provided habitat maps and the necessary tools to assist communities with integrating habitat conservation into land use planning. Recently, the program completed a **climate change vulnerability assessment** that informed several towns of the vulnerabilities associated with sea level rise and plans on how to adapt. This information, along with 9.7 million acres of wildlife habitat documented by the MDIF&W, is crucial when

buffer strips on properties in South Portland and Cape Elizabeth.

Funding has also come from the City of South Portland. The South Portland Conservation Commission committed funds to support the design of a buffer planting near the Fessenden Road crossing (to be installed next year) and to provide matching grants to purchase stream bank plants for local residents.

Those playing a role in the improvement of the Brook have worked especially hard to build public support for efforts to protect and restore the stream. Public support is essential because what people do on the land contributes to the health of the water.

"What's been happening over the past several years in Trout Brook stands out as a model for how collaboration between municipalities, citizens, schools, and resource managers can make a difference to the restoration of an urban impaired stream," explained Matt Craig of CBEP.

Trout Brook is not alone. One third of Maine's "urban impaired" streams are in the Casco Bay watershed. These streams all suffer from water quality problems related to those that Trout Brook has faced. There is much we can learn from Trout Brook to benefit other urban and suburban streams.

For more information, contact Fred Dillon at **fdillon@southportland.org** or Kate McDonald at **kmcdonald@cumberlandswcd.org**.

(This story was based in part on a presentation given by Fred Dillon and Kate McDonald)

Partner Spotlight: Trout Unlimited Sebago Chapter Receives Gold Trout Award

establishing habitat conservation requirements for the revision of the plan.

Beginning with Habitat has worked hard creating an action plan to set priorities for conservation, which may be influencing what we do in the future. With the help of partners and the public, MDIF&W will determine wildlife needs over the next year. Meetings are being held to seek input for the plan and the public is welcome to attend.

Portland Harbor Dredging

Photo courtesy of the City of Portland

The dredging of Portland Harbor, recently completed by the Army Corps of Engineers, is the first maintenance dredging in 15 years. The project restored a true 35 foot channel depth along the main federal channel on which Portland's shipping depends.

However, the federal channel is not the only part of the harbor that needs periodic maintenance. The waters adjacent to commercial piers also need regular upkeep. Businesses on the waterfront

Left: Vice President of Government Affairs Steve Moyer
Right: Maine Council & Program Chair David Bowie
Photo courtesy of Trout Unlimited

The Sebago Chapter of Trout Unlimited received the Gold Trout Award at the 2014 Annual Meeting of Trout Unlimited (TU), in Santa Fe New Mexico. The Gold Trout Award is the highest award given by TU to its Chapters. It is awarded annually to the "chapter that has made the most noteworthy contribution … to the cause of coldwater conservation during the previous year."

The Sebago Chapter was cited for is leadership on numerous conservation projects in our region, including two dam removal projects (the Swett Brook, and Randall Mill dams), partially funded by CBEP. The chapter also assisted CBEP and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with surveys of fish passage barriers for all rivers and streams flowing into Casco Bay. In addition, the award highlights their role supporting studies to understand the biology of brook trout in Maine waters, and for helping to run TU's Maine

depend on reliable access for themselves and for their customers. Periodic dredging is an important part of maintaining commercial and recreational access to the bay.

Several piers have not been dredged in over 50 years. Cumulatively, lack of a viable solution for disposal of potentially toxic materials threatens the growth of the City's working waterfront.

Unfortunately, sediments that have accumulated along the Portland waterfront may be contaminated with toxic material, derived from Portland's industrial past, or from urban runoff. Cost of disposal of toxic sediments can be high. Even the cost of testing sediments to determine whether they need special handling can pose a barrier to necessary maintenance. Properly disposing of toxic sediments would provide environmental benefits as well, by reducing the exposure of the Bay's living organisms to hazardous materials.

The Portland Harbor Non-Federal Dredge Workgroup is proposing a "confined aquatic disposal" (CAD) cell as a potential solution for disposal of contaminated sediments. A CAD cell, which involves digging an underwater hole, filling it with dredged material, and then capping the cell, will safely contain the contaminated sediment.

Council Youth Trout Camp.

CBEP offers our heartfelt congratulations to our friends at the Sebago Chapter. We could not agree more with the language of the award citation:

"From dam removal to science-based conservation and advocacy, to youth engagement and more, the Sebago Chapter is a strong model of what an active and engaged TU Chapter can accomplish." -*Trout Unlimited*

Although a CAD has never been used in Maine, they have been successful in other New England states.

Yarmouth Harbor on the Royal River was also overdue for a maintenance dredge. The last dredging of the harbor took place in 1997. Dredging of the inner harbor began in October and should continue until April 2015.

Upcoming Events

December 16, 2014

Ocean Acidification Forum & Winter Networking Event

4:30 - 7:30 pm

Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

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