

# The Newsletter of **Presumpscot Regional Land Trust**

Supporting healthy lands, waters, wildlife and people across the Presumpscot River watershed

Spring/Summer 2017

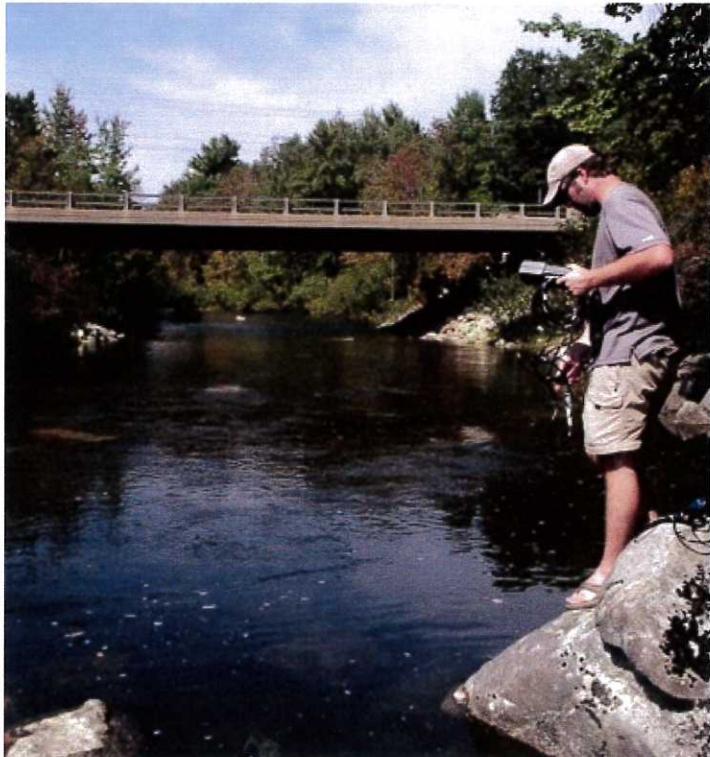
# Choose Your Own Adventure

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust is looking for volunteers to advance several important projects in the months ahead that directly impact the local environment while offering unforgettable outdoor experiences.

## NEEDED: Water Samplers

The Presumpscot River Watch has monitored water quality throughout the Presumpscot River watershed for almost 30 years, using citizen scientists to collect data to help evaluate the health of the watershed. After October's merger, the land trust is now ready to continue that work in the 2017 sampling season.

To do so, we need 20 volunteer samplers willing to give a couple of hours every other Saturday from May 20 to September 30. No prior experience is necessary and we will teach you everything you need to know to collect the samples and data. In return for your time, you'll have a great excuse for spending time by the water and surrounding habitats.



Water quality monitoring volunteer

What will you test for? Bacteria, dissolved oxygen, and temperature – key indicators of water quality. You'll learn about them all and more at this year's volunteer training, which will be held Saturday, May 6, from 9 a.m.-noon at University of Southern Maine Gorham Campus. Volunteers will then be assigned monitoring equipment and sample sites.

We have several partners to thank for the upcoming field season: the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for providing volunteer training and lending sampling equipment; the University of Southern Maine for providing lab space and intern capacity; and Casco Bay Estuary Partnership for lending sampling equipment. Having these collaborations in place is a huge step, but now we need you.

*(article continues on page 2)*

## Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust supports healthy lands, waters, wildlife, and people across the Presumpscot River watershed through conservation, water quality monitoring, education, and public access – and conserves land in the towns of Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook and Windham.

PRLT has 25 Preserves, conserving over 1,400 acres of land with miles of trails that are free and open to the public, including the 28-mile Sebago to the Sea Trail. Learn more at [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org).

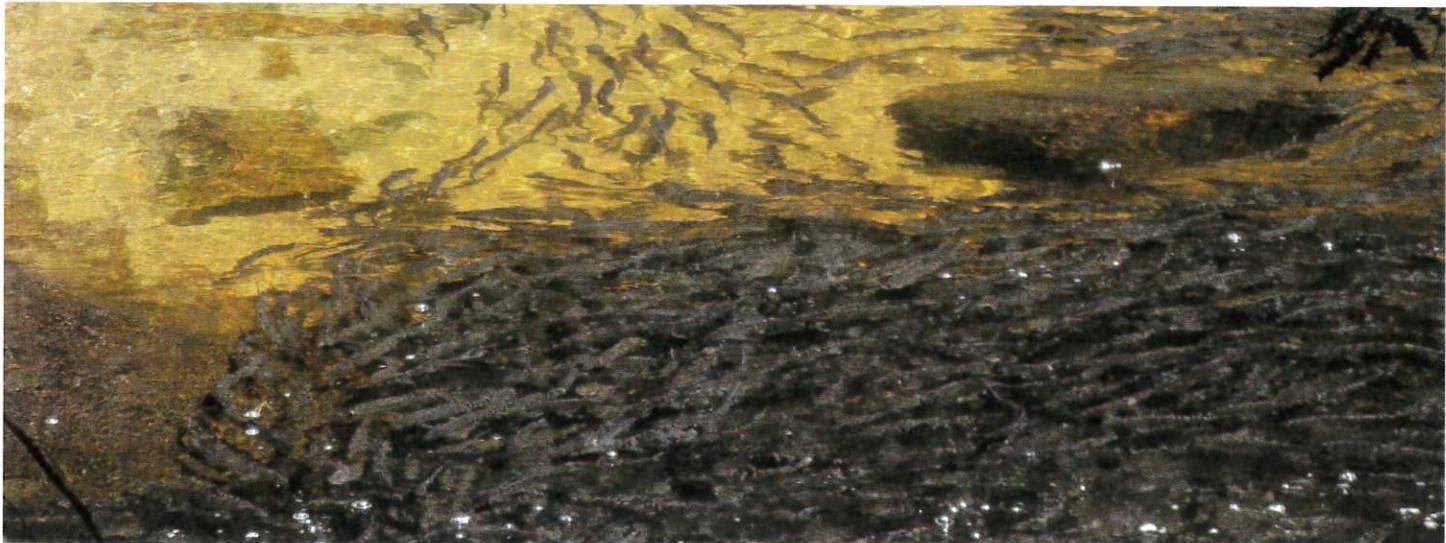
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Tamara Lee Pinard  
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Glenice Stover  
Don Wescott



### Staff

Rachelle Curran Apse, Executive Director  
Toby Jacobs, Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator



Alewife spring migration up Mill Brook.

*(cover story continued from page 1)*

### **NEEDED: Migratory Fish Counters**

You may have heard of the spring alewife run on Mill Brook, but here's your chance to see it up close and personal.

The land trust is a partner in an annual migratory fish count--coordinated by the University of Southern Maine Environmental Science and Policy Department--that provides critical data to estimating the alewife population.

Alewife live in the ocean and spawn in freshwater systems and are important to the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. In spring, they make their way from the ocean into the Presumpscot River and Mill Brook so they can reproduce in Highland Lake before returning to the sea. This is the largest and most productive alewife run in Casco Bay.

Volunteers will count fish at the Highland/Mill Brook Dam as they migrate upstream, which is typically May to



Trail work volunteers

early June. It is a simple and exciting way to volunteer while offering a backstage pass to an exciting natural phenomenon. No experience is needed and a short training will be provided. The time commitment is also short, as count slots are just 30 minutes long.

### **NEEDED: Spring Trail Clean-up Volunteers**

Starting this spring, we will be having annual spring clean-ups at each of our public access preserves. Led by the Volunteer Steward for each preserve, clean-ups will be essential in getting the parking areas, trailheads, and trails in great shape for the summer season. Stretch your legs after a long winter while becoming more acquainted with one of your favorite preserves (or discovering a new one). It is also a valuable opportunity to meet and learn from our dedicated and knowledgeable Volunteer Stewards.

Clean-up days will be held in May and June. You are welcome to come to more than one event if you'd like to help out at multiple preserves. No prior skills are necessary, and we will provide all of the necessary tools and equipment. Stewardship is one of the best ways to contribute to land trust's trails.

We hope to see you this spring.

*By Toby Jacobs*

**Sign-up to Volunteer at:**  
**[www.prlt.org/get-involved/](http://www.prlt.org/get-involved/)**

For more information contact us at  
[toby@prlt.org](mailto:toby@prlt.org) or 839-4633.

# Letter from the Executive Director

I want to take a minute to reflect on our 30th anniversary year and its many accomplishments. We created a new staff position, hiring Toby Jacobs as our Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator. With this additional staff capacity, we tripled our volunteer engagement with over 100 volunteers donating 1,700 hours to the land trust. We nearly doubled our volunteer stewards, who regularly monitor all our conserved lands and help make sure our trails are in good condition. For the first year ever, we provided monthly education programs on our preserves--and over 300 people attended.



Thanks to our merger with Windham Land Trust and Presumpscot River Watch, and the growth of our Mill Brook Preserve, we nearly doubled our public access trails and increased our conservation lands by 25 percent. We now have 14 miles of trails on 10 Preserves throughout Gorham, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook and Windham (see our Preserves and Trails webpage for trail maps). We also continue to coordinate the 28-mile Sebago to the Sea Trail.

This year is off to a strong start, with nearly 100 people already attending our winter monthly programs outside on our preserves. We are about to kick off a new collaborative internship program with USM's Environmental Science and Policy Department. Maria Guerra will be our first summer intern through this new collaboration. Our volunteer season is about to begin with numerous ways for everyone to get involved. Our Lands Committee is busy reviewing over half a dozen different potential land conservation prospects.

Our growing impact in our region is possible due to the increasing number of members and business partners. Thank you to each of you who have helped support our growing impact.

*Rachelle Curran Apse*

# Meet the Co-Presidents

It's been six months now since Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, Windham Land Trust, and Presumpscot River Watch merged into one organization. We're happy to report that our shared vision of one organization greater than the sum of its parts is coming into focus.



Andy Colvin

But first, some introductions. We are the three Co-Presidents of the PRLT Board, Andy Colvin, Tamara Lee Pinard and Priscilla Payne. Each of us was originally involved with one of the three merged organizations--Andy with PRLT, Tamara with Presumpscot River Watch, and Priscilla with Windham Land Trust.



Tamara Lee Pinard

In this case, three has not been a crowd. We chose this leadership model for the first year to help ease the transition of three Boards of Directors into one. Having the knowledge of three people at the table has been invaluable since we're all learning about the newly expanded scope of the land trust's work.



Priscilla Payne

There's been a lot to discuss. We found a wonderful new office located in Westbrook, a community where our conservation and stewardship of Mill Brook Preserve continues to grow. We've started the process of writing a three-year strategic plan (for which we'll be asking your feedback in the coming months). And we've prepared for a busy season of stewardship projects on our preserves, water quality testing along the watershed, and monthly events to provide fun and educational ways for you to get outdoors.

With six months of work under our belts, we believe more than ever that our merger was the best thing to do for the communities we serve, our members, and our missions. Looking toward the future, we're very excited about what we can accomplish together with your continued support.

Thank you,  
Andy, Tamara, Priscilla

# Restoration of Hawkes Preserve

Keep an eye out for a much-needed restoration project on the Hawkes Preserve this year, which will significantly improve the visitor experience as well as the environment.

We will address erosion along the section of the trail that follows the Presumpscot River. Heavy rains and meltwater coming down the hill currently push sediment into the river, negatively impacting water quality and aquatic life. This also causes the trail to be lower, wetter, and more unstable. We will be assessing options for how best to address the erosion this spring, solutions will include planting native trees and shrubs to stabilize the soil and provide valuable habitat.

We will also be putting in a new 60-foot bridge on the trail. Years ago, volunteers did an amazing job helping to design, construct, and install the current bridge, but time and nature have taken their toll, and it is time for a replacement. The new bridge will help decrease erosion from the banks of the canal while guaranteeing a safe trail experience for all visitors.

With its natural beauty and rich history as part of the former Cumberland and Oxford Canal, the Hawkes Preserve has always been a unique place to explore. In recent years, it's benefited greatly from the addition of a hand-carry boat access built by SAPPI and a new loop trail we created with the Great Falls Elementary School. We hope this year's updates will make it even more enjoyable for all.

*By Toby Jacobs and Don Wescott*



Presumpscot River from Hawkes Preserve. Photo credit: Eliza Curtis



Hawkes Preserve trail.



Great Falls Elementary students hiking the nature loop on Hawkes Preserve.

# Mill Brook Trail Finished, But More Is on the Way



Mill Brook Preserve trail grand opening and ribbon cutting.

In December, we held an official grand opening to celebrate the completion of the initial three-mile trail system at the Mill Brook Preserve. Outgoing and Incoming Westbrook Mayors, Colleen Hilton and Mike Sanphy, led the event along with board member Mike Parker, as about 50 people braved frigid temperatures for the ceremony and trail walk.



Alewife pool in Mill Brook Preserve.

Mike Sanphy summed up the value of the project when he said, "The Mill Brook Preserve and trail system is a highly successful collaborative initiative of the City of Westbrook, private landowners and the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust to protect and establish public access to this beautiful and incredibly valuable natural feature in our community."

The trail system is open to the public for walking, hiking, trail running, and snowshoeing. There are three trailheads—the primary one is next to 789 Methodist Road at the top of Allen Knight Road. The miles of oak-pine forest, hemlock groves, and tranquil scenes of the brook only represent the first phase of this trail project. Thanks to a City of Westbrook donation and another private donation,

we plan to expand the trail another mile to the north this year to reach the junction of Methodist Road and Route 302. Stay tuned for opportunities to help out with this exciting project.

While the trail system will be open year round, the late spring will be the high season, with the opportunity for the public to watch thousands of alewives swimming upstream from the ocean to Highland Lake to spawn. The alewives usually begin to appear in mid-May, and we will be hosting two walks at Mill Brook to view and learn about these unique and important fish. You can register at [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org). We will be sending an email out to let everyone know when the fish start running. If you'd like to be added to the list, email [info@prlt.org](mailto:info@prlt.org).

Also be sure to check out our new video, "Three Boys and a Brook" produced for Presumpscot Regional Land Trust by Galen Koch in which three members of PRLT reflect on their association in the 1940s and 1950s with what is now a portion of the Mill Brook Preserve. In this pictorial introduction to the thirty acres Ralph Hatt donated in 2016, Ralph expresses why he worked through PRLT to assure enduring public enjoyment on his land. You can see the short video on our website at [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org).

By Toby Jacobs

The land trust has many landowners and volunteers to thank for the conservation of Mill Brook, but there is one person without whom the project would never have happened – PRLT Board President Emeritus Mike Parker. From brokering the initial donation of land from the City of Westbrook to building personal connections with landowners who helped us grow the preserve, Mike has successfully led one of the most significant conservation projects in our region.



Hikers on Mill Brook Preserve

As Chair of the PRLT Lands Committee, Mike is still actively working on conservation efforts along Mill Brook and other areas. But we're not waiting to celebrate his impact. A bench will be placed at the brook in Mike's honor this summer. Hope you enjoy it as you explore the preserve he has helped to make possible.

By Andy Colvin

# Volunteer Spotlight: Eliza Jane Curtis

When it comes to marketing, having well designed and visually captivating materials is a must. In PRLT's case, it could mean the difference between a membership mailer being responded to or being thrown in the recycling.

If PRLT's growing number of members is a clue, they've been getting noticed--thanks to Eliza Jane Curtis. Since 2010, Eliza has volunteered her skills as a graphic designer to create stunning newsletters and fliers for the land trust, and has made many other contributions as a valuable member of the Community Engagement Committee.

Eliza's father, Richard Curtis, has been on the board of the land trust almost since its inception. When she returned to Maine after living abroad, Richard encouraged her to get involved and use her skills to help spread the word about the land trust.



Eliza Jane Curtis with her daughter

"It's been really interesting," Eliza said of volunteering for PRLT. "It's nice to work with environmental issues, which I don't usually get to do." In recent years, she has launched Morris & Essex, a small business designing and crafting beautiful hand-printed stationery and other items.

Growing up in Gorham, Eliza gained an early appreciation for trails and nature. In particular, she spent a lot of time on PRLT's Hawkes Preserve, which she fondly remembers exploring. Her volunteer time has been a rewarding way to connect to the land trust's work in a different way, she said. "The land trust has grown a lot since I got involved and it's been exciting to feel like I'm a part of that."

PRLT will miss Eliza as she and her growing family—husband Mike, 2-year-old Hattie and newborn Sadie—move to Philadelphia this summer. We wish them all the best and thank Eliza for her incredible service to the land trust.

By Andy Colvin

## Why I'm a River Partner

I am a Presumpscot Regional Land Trust volunteer, a member of the Community Engagement Committee, and a monthly contributor to the River Partners program. I see local land trusts as a unique and essential part of our civic environment. They are community-level conservation.



Matt Streeter

I became involved with the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust in particular because of the emphasis on the Presumpscot River watershed. In Southern Maine, the Presumpscot River and its tributaries are unique gems in the midst of increasing development. Those of us who live here need to protect the

land around us, and see to it that the environment improves rather than degrades. If we don't do it, then nobody will.

The land trust makes the connection between healthy communities, healthy forests, and healthy waterways. Because I see the land trust as a core part of the community, I volunteer my time and participate in planning at the committee level. My monthly automatic payments to the River Partners program are hassle-free and routine. To me, that reflects the fact that they are essential. Will you considering joining me in becoming a River Partner?

By Matt Streeter

### RIVER PARTNER INVITATION

We invite you to consider being a member for our River Partner monthly giving program and keep your support for the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust flowing year round.

\$5    \$10    \$15    \$20    \$25    \$50    \$100   Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a check for my first month's gift. Please transfer my future monthly gifts from my checking account.

Signature (required for River Partner monthly giving)

Date

I understand that this is an automated monthly giving program billed on the 20th of each month. The River Partner monthly giving program is a safe and easy way to give. Your gift is processed directly through Gorham Savings Bank. You can choose how much to donate, you can increase, decrease, or stop your gift at any time by calling our land trust at 839-4633 or emailing info@prlt.org. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt for your contributions at the end of each year.

# Business Partners



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## Gorham Times

Thank you to our business partners.

Find out more about becoming a Business Partner by emailing [info@prlt.org](mailto:info@prlt.org) or go to [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org)

### Thank You Also to the Businesses, Municipalities, and Foundations Who Have Supported Our Work in the Last Year:

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

Davis Conservation Foundation

Douglas, McDaniel, Campo & Schools

Galen Koch Videographer

Louis Solari Real Estate Appraisals

MCHT's Maine Excellence Program

MCHT's Merger Fund

MCHT's LL Bean Land Trust Grant Program

MCF's Community Building Grant

MCF's Fund for Maine Land Conservation

MCF's Undapassawana Fund

Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust

Morgan Stanley

Morris and Essex

Norcross Wildlife Foundation

Pierce Atwood

R.J. Grondin & Sons

Simmer Public Relations

Steve Martin Professional Land Surveyor

Town of Gorham

Vienna Farm

Westbrook Trailblazers

Westbrook Environmental Improvement Corp

Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission

Windham Watershed Protection Grant



Freeman Farm Preserve. Photo credit: Ray Monahan

### Membership Makes it Happen

Our largest source of financial support comes from people like you, our members.

Presumpscot Regional Land Trust supports healthy lands, waters, wildlife, and people across the Presumpscot River watershed through conservation, water quality monitoring, education, and public access - and conserves land in the towns of Gorham, Gray, Sebago, Standish, Westbrook and Windham. Membership gives you unique opportunities to connect with our Preserves and meet others who care about conservation.

Yes, I want to support the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust today.

\$35    \$50    \$100    \$250

\$500    \$1,000    \$5,000   Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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My company will match my gift

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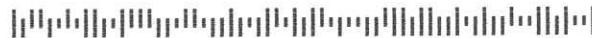
Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, P.O. Box 33, Gorham, Maine 04038 or donate at [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org). As a 501(c)(3), all donations to PRLT are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



## Presumpscot Regional Land Trust

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## Upcoming Events

### Spring Run: Fish Migration Walk 1

Saturday May 27 at 10am

Mill Brook Preserve, Westbrook

Join us to learn about and see up-close the incredible migration of thousands of alewives up Mill Brook on their way to Highland Lake while also hiking on the new Mill Brook Preserve trails. This two hour event will be led by a local alewife expert.

### Spring Run: Fish Migration Walk 2

Saturday June 3 at 10am

Mill Brook Preserve, Westbrook

Due to popularity last year, we will be holding a second two hour alewife walk, led by Dr. Karen Wilson and Dr. Theo Willis of University of Southern Maine Environmental Science and Policy Department, to give more visitors a chance to see the fish and the new Mill Brook Preserve trails.

### Exploring Mushrooms

Saturday July 15 at 10am

Black Brook Preserve, Windham

Come learn about the wide diversity of mushrooms in the Presumpscot region on this two hour walk led by Alan Seamans of the Maine Mycological Association.

### Paddling the Presumpscot

Saturday August 5 at 10am

Hawkes Preserve, Gorham

Hop in a canoe or kayak to spend a warm summer morning exploring the nature and history of the Hawkes Preserve from the water with event leader Margaret Burns, Geographer and Hydrologist with FB Environmental. Please bring your own boat for the event.

All events are free, but space is limited, RSVP required.

To learn more and RSVP go to: [www.prlt.org](http://www.prlt.org)

Contact us at 839-4633 with questions or to sign-up by phone.