

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bristol Mills Dam Advisory Committee review the options available for Bristol's firefighting water supply

Bristol, Maine – June 20, 2017 – On June 13th, Paul Leeman, Bristol's Fire Chief and Tim Miller, the town's 2nd Assistant Chief, joined Joe McLean, Project Manager and Jamie Wallace, Project Engineer, both of Wright Pierce Engineering to review the town's current firefighting water supply sources and identify nine sites that can be considered additional as well as alternative sites for meeting the town's needs for water to fight fires.

Mr. McLean began by reminding everyone one that Bristol has three fire stations: one in Bristol Mills that is close to the dam, one that is in the village of Round Pond, and the third located in New Harbor.

The discussion began by first explaining what a dry hydrant is and the general characteristics of the water source that are necessary for the source to be considered appropriate. Mr. McLean commented that a dry hydrant, unlike those found in communities with municipal water systems, do not have water under pressure in the hydrant. A dry hydrant is a permanently installed pipe that does not have any water in the pipe and has one end of the pipe below the water level of a lake or pond. This end usually has a strainer to prevent debris from entering the pipe. The other end is above ground and has a hard sleeve connector. When needed, a pumper fire engine will "pull" water from the lake or pond into a fire apparatus that is equipped with a large water tank. This vehicle transports the water to the site of the fire. It's common for a relay of water carrying trucks to be employed allowing water to be pumped from the water source to a vehicle at the same time another water carrying truck is at the fire scene supplying water for the fire fighters' use.

Mr. McLean noted that there are federal, state, and insurance industry standards that control the rating and acceptability of the water source. Of particular importance to Bristol ~~residence~~ **residents** is the insurance rating (the better the rating, the lower the cost of fire insurance). The distance of a firefighting water source to a structure is one key insurance metric: rates are lower for structures that are within five road miles of the closest water source. With the exception of one small area, all of Bristol lies within that 5 road mile zone of at least one water source.

~~Mr.~~ **Chief** Leeman noted that for the water source to be acceptable, not only is it necessary that the source be reliable in terms of water quantity (even in severe ~~draught~~ **drought** conditions), water quality is also important (briny, silt-laden, or iron-laden water is not appropriate). Other important factors relate to the site where the water is extracted: the vertical distance from the surface of the water to the ~~intake~~ **intake** valve on the pumping truck must be less than 15 feet for the truck's pumps to efficiently draw the water; there needs to be adequate hard surface road near the dry hydrant for the pumper and at least one tank truck; and there needs to adequate hard surface area for the vehicles to turn around in one forward motion.

There are 8 dry hydrants in Bristol. The fire department's primary dry hydrant is the one currently installed at the dam. The driveway between the swimming hole and Route 130 offers easy access and egress. Route 130 provides good visibility in both directions and a parallel hard surface for the trucks receiving pumped water to park. The fire station and roads around the Town Hall offer turn-around space. The water is clean/clear water and the dependable volume easily supports the 1,600 gallon per minute demand of the fire equipment's pumps. And lastly, the location is central to the whole village. There are two hydrants in Round Pond. One is near the Round Pond Fire Station and the site will soon be improved by adding a parking area and the second, located along Northern Point Road is rarely used because of its limited supply of water. An area in the Transfer Station facility is used for fire fighter training and has a dry hydrant located on the property. While not at an optimum location, if an enlarged area for truck maneuvering were put in place, it could be a usable resource. There's a dry hydrant near the Hammond Lumber facility. This source is limited due to the fact that the volume of water from the stream varies considerably and access to a more than adequate hard top surface is chained-off when they're closed. And lastly, there are two hydrants in New Harbor. One is close to the New Harbor Fire Station offering good truck access/egress and a good supply of water provided by New Harbor Pond. And the other hydrant is further down Route 130 toward the lighthouse. The narrow road limits truck maneuverability and ~~depending~~ **depends** on the industry of the beavers to ensure an adequate water supply at all times is not optimum.

The discussion then shifted to reviewing sites that offer the possibility of replacing the Bristol Dam dry hydrant. The dry hydrant located near the Round Pond Fire Station, the one adjacent to the New Harbor Pond and near the New Harbor Fire Station, and the unit in the Transfer Station facility could be acceptable alternatives. Each of these would require various site-specific improvements. Sites that look promising (but require additional assessment to ensure their appropriateness) include a site that is further along Route 130 toward Damariscotta, a site on Lower Round Pond Road, one on Upper Round Pond Road, and possibly, a site on ~~Karl~~ **Carl** Bailey Road. The two that are the most promising alternatives are the two that are closest to the existing Bristol Mills (dam) dry hydrant. One is at the boat launch and the second is near the Partridge Bridge. Both benefit from the same good water source attributes as the current hydrant. Site improvements would be needed for truck access/egress at each site as well as constructing a truck drive way lower than the current road's elevation to meet truck-to-water surface distance limitations at the Partridge Bride site. Improvements at the boat launch site include installing hard road surface material for truck maneuverability and a concrete "path" into the water to provide truck access to the water at its various heights during the year. Mr. McLean commented that the boat launch site is most likely to be the best alternative. While detailed work would be required to confirm his observation, he feels confident that it likely would result in the least costly option while offering the closest comparable characteristics to that of the existing nearby dry hydrant at the dam. Of note is the fact that, as is the case of most of the alternative sites, these two sites would require purchasing some amount of private property.

A question and answer period then followed. Chief ~~Leeman~~ **Leeman** was asked what the projected ~~fire fighting~~ **firefighting** water needs are over the course of the next 10 to 20 years. He first noted that there has been a decrease in structure fires during the past 5 years. He then commented that as a result of the town's supporting its fire department, the town has better and more efficient and effective firefighting equipment. And the equipment is employed by very

well trained fire fighter. The result is that Chief Leeman feels that there is no need for additional water resources in the foreseeable future. That said, he was very appreciative of the work completed by the Wright Pierce team. Having an engineer's observations of the current dry hydrants and a well thought out assessment of the inventory of water resources (existing and possible future ones) is very valuable.

When directly asked about the Fire Department's position regarding the dry hydrant installed at the Bristol Mills dam, Chief Leeman's response was "The dam site is the perfect location". Assistant Chief Tim Miller added that "It's our go-to site. Our fire-fighting capability will degrade if the dam site dry hydrant is removed". Chief Leeman concluded by noting that his department well understands that the decision that will eventually be made has many factors to consider and that whatever that decision is, the Bristol Fire Department will continue protecting the town of Bristol.

Upcoming meetings of the Bristol Mills Dam Advisory Committee will include Mr. Chad Hannah, the Chairman of the Bristol Board of Selectmen, sharing the Bristol Mills Dam project history (June 27), and presentations and discussions by Ms. Deb Wilson, Damariscotta Fish Ladder Project (on July 11) and Mr. Greg Shute, Alna Head Tide Dam project (July 25) about their experiences. The Committee meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month from 6-8pm at the Bristol Town Office. All meetings are open to the public and all Committee materials, including supplementary reports and background information, are available at the Town Office. We hope to share this process with as many town residents and interested people as possible. Please join us to learn more about this valuable resource. The Dam Committee welcomes Public Comments.