

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Bristol Dam Committee Discusses Concepts for Ellingwood Park**

During their meeting on Sept. 12, the Bristol Mills Dam Committee met with Joe McLean from Wright Pierce Engineering and members of the Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss potential improvements to the town's Ellingwood Park area, located 0.2 miles north of the Bristol Mills Dam. The concepts developed by Wright Pierce focused on retaining many of the benefits of the current dam impoundment if the Bristol Mills Dam were removed and replaced with a nature-like fishway and water control structures.

McLean presented a conceptual plan which included a paved driveway from Benner Road to the current boat launch site, a circular loop close to the boat launch to allow for turning by boat trailers and fire trucks, and a dry hydrant for firefighting water supply. A new swimming area would be located immediately behind the Ellingwood Information Center by building a swimming dock at the area where ledge drops into the river at the deepest spot.

The committee discussed many aspects of the concept, including the quality of swimming in this potential new area. While the river contains marsh areas on the north side in this segment, the south side abutting Ellingwood Park is ledge that is maintained by the river channel. The depth of the river in this segment is about 7-8ft.

The concept would increase available parking at the site from what is there currently by building a larger parking area, with the potential to add more parking on the proposed new loop drive by directing a one-way traffic flow.

Wright Pierce will discuss this concept in more detail with the Parks and Recreation Commission at a future date, as well as with the Bristol Fire Department to determine if firefighting water supply and loading needs would be met. Wright Pierce will prepare a cost estimate for this concept that will be included in the Feasibility Study and delivered to the Dam Committee in late October.

The Committee also resumed discussion of concepts for the Bristol Mills Dam site. The dam, which was last repaired in 1994, currently needs repairs and lacks adequate fish passage for alewives and other native fish species in the Pemaquid River. The concepts under consideration are 1) repair and modify the dam to meet community safety needs and replace the old fishway with a new, improved one, 2) partial replacement of the dam with control of water levels and fish passage performed by "nature-like" structures, and 3) full dam replacement with nature-like water control and fish passage. The Committee discussed the first option during its July 11 meeting and the second option on July 25. The minutes for these meetings are available through the town office.

During this meeting, the Committee discussed the option that would replace the dam with nature-like water control structures and fish passage. Bedrock ledges and narrows at the stone arch bridge over the Pemaquid River at Benner Road represent a natural water level control which,

absent the Bristol Mills Dam, would define the base water level upstream. In the absence of the Dam, the water levels in the wetland and Biscay Pond would be lower by 13 inches.

These findings indicate that nature-like rock weirs could be constructed in the area between the stone arch bridge on the Benner Rd. and the falls below that would maintain water level in the Pemaquid River marsh and the lakes upstream at its current condition. This could be achieved in 'steps' of around 8 inches, spaced over a distance of about 75 feet, to allow for effective fish and aquatic species passage.

The Committee discussed the potential locations of the rock weirs, noting that the Stone Arch Bridge at the Benner Road is a popular spot to see by kayak or canoe. McLean indicated that the ledge downstream was appropriate for citing a rock-weir system. McLean also noted that the sediment on the river bed between the Benner Road and the Bristol Dam observed during the 2016 drawdown would not remain, but would be flushed out and the river would flow over ledge throughout that stretch.

Upcoming meetings of the Committee will include and a discussion with Herb Hartman who will discuss the town of Whitefield's process in determining to remove the Coopers Mills Dam on the Sheepscot River. The Committee meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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.