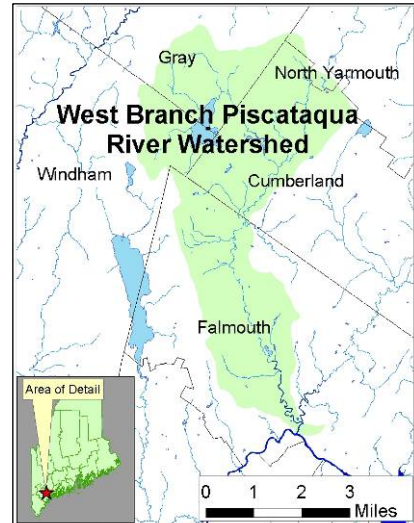


# West Branch Piscataqua River Watershed Survey

#2005R-04

Waterbody Name: West Branch Piscataqua River  
Location: Cumberland, Windham, Falmouth, North Yarmouth – Cumberland County  
Waterbody Status: NPS Priority Watershed  
Project Grantee: Presumpscot River Watch  
Project Duration: March 2005 – September 2008  
319 Grant Amount: \$13,520  
Local Match: \$9,650



## PROBLEM:

The West Branch of the Piscataqua River has a watershed that covers 18.9 square miles and includes Forest Lake and portions of four towns. The watershed's population of approximately 5,000 residents has increased by nearly 20% per decade over the last 30 years. The West Branch joins the East Branch in Falmouth and then flows into the Presumpscot River. The Piscataqua River was identified as a high priority tributary in the *Presumpscot River Management Plan* (2003) due to water quality concerns and the 2002 removal of the Smelt Hill Dam, which will allow migratory fish passage into the Piscataqua River and other tributaries.

The Piscataqua River is officially listed as “impaired by bacteria contamination” by the Maine DEP. The DEP's statewide bacteria TMDL, which includes the Piscataqua River, is currently in draft form. Presumpscot River Watch (PRW) data collected since 1989 indicates that portions of the West Branch experience low dissolved oxygen, high turbidity levels and high bacteria levels. Potential sources of these problems are not known since the sample stations are located at the lower reaches of the river. Watershed survey and stream corridor assessments were completed for the East Branch in 2006, and several projects have been completed in the Forest Lake subwatershed, including a watershed survey (2002), watershed management plan (2003) and two watershed implementation projects (2004 – present).

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

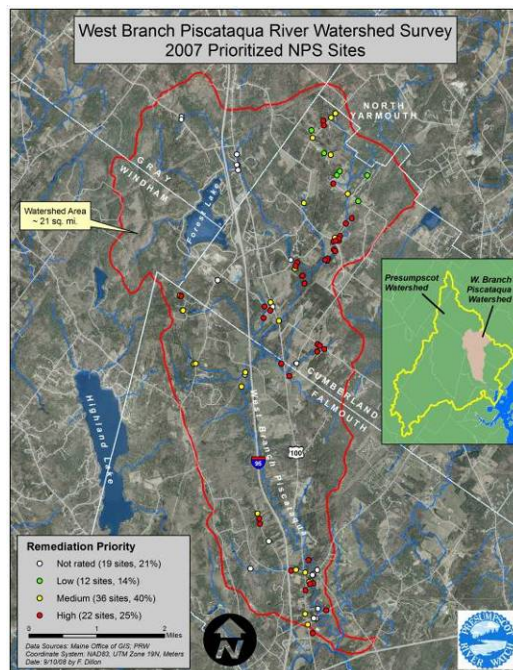
This goal of the project was to conduct a watershed survey to identify and prioritize NPS sources to the West Branch Piscataqua River. The survey was publicized in three local papers, and project fact sheets were mailed to about 500 watershed landowners. Technical staff trained 12 volunteers in May 2007 and 89 sites were identified. A rapid geomorphology assessment was conducted for eight representative reaches on the river and one tributary in August 2006. A summary report was completed in September 2008. The US Fish and Wildlife Service trained helped conduct a culvert and fish passage survey along the Piscataqua River corridor.



Misaligned culvert and lack of buffer

## PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- 89 nonpoint source pollution sites were documented. Land uses with the most problems included town roads (29%), residential areas (19%), commercial (19%) and private roads (10%).
- Survey findings were summarized in the *West Branch Piscataqua River Watershed Survey Report* (September 2008), which includes a list and maps of all documented NPS sites.
- Project staff created a scoring system to prioritize remediation efforts. 22 sites were rated as high priorities since they have a relatively high impact to water quality and can be fixed with lower cost.
- Findings from the rapid geomorphology survey were summarized in the DEP report, *Piscataqua River Watershed (West Branch) Stream Corridor Survey – Summary Report*.



## PROJECT PARTNERS:

Towns of Cumberland, Falmouth and Yarmouth  
Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition  
Cumberland County SWCD  
Casco Bay Estuary Project  
US Fish and Wildlife Service

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

Don Kale, DEP-(207)822-6319, [Donald.Kale@maine.gov](mailto:Donald.Kale@maine.gov)  
Forrest Bell, Presumpscot River Watch, (207) 221-6699, [prw@maine.rr.com](mailto:prw@maine.rr.com)

Suggested Citation:

Maine Department of Environmental Protection (2009) "Nonpoint Source Management Program 2008 Annual Report," Document# DEPLW-0973 2009. Augusta: MDEP.