Branch Brook, Merriland River, Little River Watershed Management Plan #2001P-15

Waterbody Name: Merriland River, Branch Brook and Little River

Location: Wells, Kennebunk and Sanford, York County

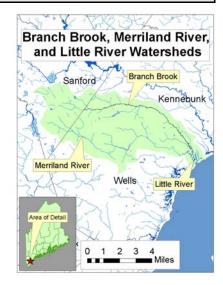
Waterbody Status: Branch Brook - NPS Priority Watershed

Project Sponsor: Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Duration: May 2001 – February 2005

319 Grant Amount: \$19,800

Match: \$26,005



PROBLEM:

The Little River watershed (31.5 square miles) includes two major tributaries – Branch Brook and Merriland River. Both tributaries begin near the Sanford airport, flow southeasterly and drain land from Wells and Kennebunk. They join together in the upper mile of the Little River estuary. Estuary water quality is considered poor due to high fecal coliform levels, and shellfish harvesting has been closed for the past twenty years. Microbial source tracking in 2002 indicated that about two-thirds of the identified *E.coli* samples were related to human activity including septic, pets and livestock.

The watershed includes a municipal airport at the headwaters of Branch Brook, the aquifer of the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells (KKW) Water District and several conservation lands including Laudholm Farms, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), and KKW Water District lands. There is an ever-growing threat of nutrient and toxic contamination from burgeoning commercial, recreational and residential development, much of which is located within 250 feet of the water.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of the project was to produce a community-based watershed management plan for the Branch Brook, Merriland River and Little River combined watershed. Watershed stakeholders met 9 times to identify current and emerging threats to water quality and develop strategies to manage them. In 2001, project staff and 42 volunteers conducted a shoreline survey (250' on each side) along the mainstems and tributaries and identified 52 potential NPS sites. Findings were summarized in a survey report.

Survey data and the stakeholder input were then used to develop a draft Watershed Management Plan. Key elements of the plan were presented at 11 meetings with Planning Boards, Rotary Clubs, realtors and other community groups. Public comments were then incorporated into the final Watershed Management Plan and presented at a public meeting in November, 2004.



PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- Project staff completed a shoreline survey of the mainstems and tributaries of the Merriland River, Branch Brook and the Little River. The survey documented 52 NPS sites, which were summarized in the report, *Merriland, Branch, Little River Watershed Shoreland Survey* August, 2002).
- The Merriland River, Branch Brook, and Little River Watershed Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan was completed in November, 2004.
- The project helped focus the energies of the MBLR stakeholders, a group that had met periodically for over ten years. This group met 11 times during the project period and the number of participants and organizations involved exceeded expectations. This group has since evolved into a Watershed Council and will help oversee and review the WMP.
- Both the shoreline survey and WMP process provided many opportunities for public participation and
 involvement. Through public meetings and newspaper articles the public is more aware of watershed
 issues. The project also helped to involve the Town of Sanford as a significant participant in plan
 implementation.



PROJECT PARTNERS:

University of Maine Sea Grant Program
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission
Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells Water District
Rachel Carson Wildlife Refuge
Town of Sanford Regional Airport
Department of Marine Resources

Town of Kennebunk Town of Wells Town of Sanford The Nature Conservancy Kennebunk Land Trust

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