



Whitten Brook –Watershed Planning Meeting

Town Council Chambers, Skowhegan, ME

November 10, 2010

Overview

The second in a series of watershed planning meetings for Whitten Brook was held at the town council chambers in Skowhegan on November 10th. Approximately 15 people were in attendance including representatives from the Skowhegan Conservation Commission, the Town of Skowhegan, landowners, a business owner, FB Environmental, and the Maine DEP. Background information on the current state of the watershed, results of the 2010 Stream and Watershed Study, the 2010 Conservation Commission stream clean-up, and some in-stream stormwater treatment options were all part of the meeting.

Development of Steering Committee/TAC

Stakeholders interested in participating on a steering committee (or technical advisory committee) were asked to check a box on the sign-in sheet. The steering committee will meet twice before the final Watershed Plan is completed in February 2011. Meetings are open to any interested individual, town employee, or community group. The first meeting will be held sometime around the week of December 1st.

Facilitated Planning Discussion

Following a pizza dinner, stakeholders were asked what they perceived as problems in the watershed that may be affecting water quality as well as possible solutions to these problems. Activities that are currently working (good things) were also recorded. Results of this discussion are presented below (and in Table 1 next page), and will be incorporated into the final Whitten Brook Watershed Restoration Plan.

GOOD THINGS

- Stream clean up went very well, and had youth involvement.
- The stakeholders involved are positive and enthusiastic.
- Downtown / Main Street Association's willingness to help is great for exposure and funding.
- Many businesses within the watershed have in-line stormwater storage and/or underground stormwater storage tanks currently in place.
- Skowhegan Public Works Department has been, and is in a good position to continue being, a good steward for Whitten Brook.
- There is a lot of undeveloped forested land in the west branch of the watershed.

Table 1. Problems and Solutions in the Whitten Brook Watershed.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
<p># 1: Shoreland Zoning in the Town of Skowhegan excludes the land along Whitten Brook.</p>	<p>1) Work with the town to develop mandatory zoning to protect the brook. Make the appropriate amendments to the zoning map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skowhegan does not have specific zones, as most towns do, regulating where residential development, industrial development, commercial development, etc., can happen. Therefore it is important to have specific set-backs built into the town’s shoreland zoning along Whitten Brook. ▪ The town of Westbrook, on its own, expanded on the mandatory 75’ buffer for stream corridors, because of concerned citizens. Therefore, it can be done.
<p># 2: Connections needs to be made between the restoration plan, landowners, and other stakeholders in Skowhegan.</p>	<p>1) Contact MDOT, which is in charge of maintaining Rt. 201 (Madison Avenue) running through the heart of Whitten Brook’s watershed and a major source of polluted runoff.</p> <p>2) Engage MDOT to spend money on retrofits that will help to improve the water quality of the stream. Such a large and important stakeholder will help to build confidence in the project.</p> <p>3) Contact the Main Street Association and other civic organizations within Skowhegan. Work with these groups to raise awareness about the brook and the restoration process. Highly involved and highly visible organizations within the town will help to spread the word in ways that landowners or town officials could not.</p> <p>4) Reach out to community members outside of the watershed. The whole town has a responsibility to clean up the brook.</p> <p>5) Establish an “adopt a stream segment” within the community, where individuals or groups take charge and responsibility for cleaning up trash and debris within their area of the stream. Such action could be a positive way to engage the whole community, not just landowners within the watershed and town officials.</p> <p>6) Engage school groups, from elementary up through high school. If the students get involved and become interested in helping out the brook, they may talk with their parents and help to spread the word on what is happening.</p>
<p># 3: Lack of current stakeholder involvement from the commercial district.</p>	<p>1) Talk with landowners and business owners about “going green” and how they can make the change.</p> <p>2) Business owners in the town of Wells have “adopted” a stream and are involved in making sure that it is clean and healthy. They use this for good public relations and publicity.</p> <p>3) The Skowhegan Main Street Association currently supports protecting Brook Trout habitat. Whitten Brook still has native Brook Trout, and this could be used as a way to engage the Association.</p>
<p># 4: Rt. 201 stormwater outfalls into the brook are “hot spots,” and should therefore be considered high priority and dealt with promptly.</p>	<p>Work with the businesses along Rt. 201 to help them reduce their stormwater runoff. If these businesses could understand how to reduce their impact on the stream, some of them may take charge.</p>
<p># 5: Fairgrounds Piping</p>	<p>Collaborate with the Public Works Department in town. Acknowledge the efforts the town is making to clean up the brook.</p>
<p># 6: Stormwater is as dirty as sewer water after a long dry spell.</p>	<p>Work with the citizens and educate them about how dirty stormwater is, as most people do not usually think about where water goes once it leaves the street.</p>

<p># 7: ATVs cause a lot of erosion and problems when they drive through the stream.</p>	<p>Provide ATV riders a place to ride where the impacts on the stream will be minimal. Designate trails in the watershed that are good for people to ride on.</p>
<p># 8: Most of the forested land within the watershed is not protected.</p>	<p>Work with stakeholders to expand the amount of land currently held by Somerset Woods Trustees in conservation land.</p>
<p># 9: Lack of current stormwater management rules in place within Skowhegan to protect the brook. The only rules that could protect the brook from future development are set by the state. The state regulations require the development to pass a size threshold to become active.</p>	<p>Expand town stormwater rules to cover development that is under the state threshold.</p>
<p># 10: All of the key stakeholders need to be brought together and talk about ways to restore the brook.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Coordinate a meeting that includes the Conservation Commission, Somerset Woods, business owners, Main Street Association, and concerned citizens to talk about logistics. 2) Talk with neighbors about what is happening in the watershed, one of the best ways to raise awareness and spread the word is by word of mouth.