

Media Contacts:

Jennifer Hunter, York River Study Coordinator  
207-641-9122, [jh.yorkriver@gmail.com](mailto:jh.yorkriver@gmail.com)

Chuck Ott, York River Study Committee Chair  
207-332-9298, [cott1@maine.rr.com](mailto:cott1@maine.rr.com)

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**York River Study Committee  
Public Walking Tours, Watershed Research, and Efforts to Preserve Working Waterfront**

ELIOT, KITTERY, SOUTH BERWICK & YORK – Through public events, research, and policy decisions, the York River Study Committee is engaging local communities in efforts to increase understanding and protect outstanding resources in the York River watershed. Since its formation in 2015, the Committee has been working with community members to develop a York River Watershed Management Plan and explore whether portions of the watershed rivers would benefit from being designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. “Receiving a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation from the National Park Service is a unique opportunity to garner federal support that would help protect the York River’s remarkable value to the communities,” said York River Study Coordinator Jennifer Hunter.

**Upcoming Watershed Walking Tours**

Members of the public are invited to join the York River Study Committee and local conservation and community groups for two free walking tours to learn about some of the unique history and habitats of the York River watershed.

***York’s Working Waterfront, Past and Present***

***Thursday, July 13, 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM***

Curator Mary Harding will speak about the history of the George Marshall Store Gallery and the John Hancock Warehouse, two of Old York’s properties with early ties to the river. Lobsterman Jeff Donnell will speak about York’s commercial fishing operations and working waterfront, including Hancock Wharf and Sewall’s Dock. Old York’s Executive Director Joel Lefever will guide attendees through Steedman Woods and back, highlighting some of York’s early business ventures that altered the banks of the York River. *Park at York Golf and Tennis Club, walk across Lindsay Road, and meet at the George Marshall Store Gallery. The walk will cover up to 1.5 miles, traveling along the shoulder of the road and along the trails in Steedman Woods.*

***York River Estuary Habitats and Species: Smelt Brook Preserve***

***Thursday, July 20, 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM***

Joe Anderson, Stewardship Director for the York Land Trust, will discuss the diverse habitats of the preserve, with an emphasis on salt marshes and ongoing efforts to monitor and manage this important habitat in light of sea level rise. A Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve biologist will discuss the recently conducted fish study and what some of the findings tell us about the condition of the York River. *Park at York Land Trust’s Highland Farm Preserve parking lot, accessed from Route 91 about 1 mile*

*west of the intersection with Scotland Bridge Road. The walk will cover about 1.5 miles on the Smelt Brook Preserve Riverview Trail (level, but uneven ground).*

Registration for the walking tours is required as space is limited. To register for one or both walks, contact York River Study Coordinator Jennifer Hunter at [jh.yorkriver@gmail.com](mailto:jh.yorkriver@gmail.com). Please indicate the walk you would like to attend, the number of participants, and the best email to contact you with any follow up details or in case of a cancellation due to weather.

### **York River Watershed Research**

In an effort to increase understanding of past, present and future resources and conditions in the York River Watershed, the York River Study Committee has conducted a fish monitoring project during the spring of 2017, launched an archaeological survey of historic resources during the summer of 2017, and plans to conduct a build-out study to understand future pressures on watershed resources later in 2017. As they become available, research results and related events are posted to the York River Study Committee website at <http://www.yorkrivermaine.org/>.

### **Policy Decision to Protect the Working Waterfront**

At its June 27 meeting, members of the York River Study Committee took steps to ensure that their efforts to protect the watershed would support future maintenance dredging of the York River estuary. "We have identified the York River's working waterfront and fishing industry as one of several important resources that must be preserved for the future," said York River Study Committee Chair Chuck Ott. In support of this priority, the York River Study Committee voted unanimously that if the York River is recommended for a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation into the national system, the downstream boundary for such designation would be the existing Route 103 Bridge located at the upstream extent of the York Harbor Federal Navigation Project area.

### **About the York River Study Committee**

The York River Study Committee convened in 2015 to work with community members to develop a York River Watershed Management Plan and evaluate the suitability of a Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation for the river and its tributaries. The Study Committee includes residents from Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick, and York. Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend any of the York River Study Committee's meetings. Meeting schedules and documents, upcoming events, and more information about the York River Study Committee is available at: <http://www.yorkrivermaine.org/>.

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