

York River Study Committee / ORV Subcommittee Meeting  
Topic: Drinking Water Supplies and Source Water Protection  
Thursday May 11, 2017, 10:30 AM – Noon  
York Public Library Community Room

## Meeting Notes

### Attendees:

York River Study Committee members: Karen Arsenault, Jean Demetracopoulos, Jennifer Hunter, Thom Kearns, Jack Murphy, Chuck Ott, and Judy Spiller

Other participants: Priscilla Cookson, Karl Honkonen, Doreen MacGillis, Don Neumann, Susie Rice, Mike Rogers, Gary Stevens, Paula Sewall, and Karen Young

Meeting goals: The York River Study Committee has organized a series of meetings on specific topics to gather and share information to help characterize watershed resources and develop management plan actions and recommendations. Experts, project managers, and others interested in topics are invited to provide input and share ideas, information, and concerns at these meetings.

- **Presentation on *Forests, Water and People* – Karl Honkonen, Forest Watershed Specialist, US Forest Service**  
*Presentation:* <http://www.yorkrivermaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Forests-Water-People051117.pdf>  
*USFS Website with links to full report and data sets:* [https://www.na.fs.fed.us/watershed/fwp\\_preview.shtm](https://www.na.fs.fed.us/watershed/fwp_preview.shtm)

Karl presented information on the *Forests, Water, and People* report and analysis conducted by US Forest Service and other organizations. The 2010 study focused on the northeast region of the US to demonstrate connections between forests and water – quality and quantity – and how forest conversion affects water supply. The study involved ranking various characteristics and vulnerabilities, and looked at factors such as housing density, percent unprotected lands, private ownership, etc. Existing conditions and future conditions were assessed. The study serves as a strategic plan that helps USFS focus on where to work and prioritize assistance and funding needs. The Salmon Falls/Piscataqua region (into which the York River watershed is grouped), as well as other southern Maine drinking water supply areas are high priority areas because of high risk of conversion.

Questions, comments and additional discussion:

- Are there grants for land conservation activities? Yes – landscape scale grants are possible through the Farm Bill/Forest Action Plan (50% cost share requirement) and through the Forest Legacy Program.
- Are the specific data layers for York River watershed available? Yes – they should be available from the USFS website.

- **Kittery Water District water supplies – Mike Rogers, Superintendent, Kittery Water District**

Mike shared the following information about the water supplies and KWD lands:

*In 1907 the Kittery Water District purchased Folly Pond, the watershed property around it and the water mains leading from York to Kittery from the Agamenticus Water Company for \$165,000. Our filtration plant and pump station is located at 28 New Boston Road and was built in 1959. Whereas our plant is approaching 60 years old, we are planning some major upgrades next year. We produce an average of 2.4 million gallons per day, and average about 1 billion gallons a year. We have 5400 customers plus the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard which uses about 40% of the water that we produce daily.*

*The District owns approximately 2400 acres of land in York which includes the four man made ponds and the watershed property around them. The four ponds are:*

- *Folly Pond - constructed in 1901, covers 71 acres, measures 1 ½ miles long and has a capacity of 273 million gallons.*
- *Middle Pond - constructed in 1942, covers 55 acres, measures ¾ mile long and has a capacity of 321 million gallons. Other than water running out of the watershed, the only other time that the water from Middle Pond ends up flowing into the York River is when the pond is overfull and flowing over the spillway, normally in the spring of the year, as it is now. The drainage channel from Middle Pond to the York River, flowing into Cider Hill Creek, is approximately 1 mile long.*
- *Boulter Pond - constructed in 1951, covers 110 acres, measures 2.1 miles long and has a capacity of 400 million gallons. The only time that the water from Boulter Pond flows into the York River is when the pond is overfull and running over the spillway, at it is now. This water flows down Bass Cove Brook for about 1000 feet before it gets to the York River.*
- *Bell Marsh Reservoir - constructed in 1987, covers 206 acres, measures 1 ¾ miles long and has a capacity of 1200 million gallons. We are regulated by the DEP to provide a stream release to Smelt Brook year around, as we dammed up the brook when the reservoir was built. This water is also conditioned and monitored as it needs to meet a set dissolved oxygen level and a certain flow of water depending on the time of the year. This water constantly flows into Smelt Brook and needs to flow about 3000 feet before it gets to the York River.*

*The District has an active forest management plan and will usually conduct one timber harvest per year. We allow passive recreation on our land, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, cross country skiing, snowmobiles and ATVs by permit to residents of the 3 towns that we service. No fishing, boating or bodily contact with the water is allowed.*

Questions, comments, and additional discussion:

- More information was sought for the forest management plan. Mike indicated the goal is primarily to remove hardwoods. KWD uses a contractor to conduct selective cuts, generally in the fall, on about 100 acres of land per year.
- Is there a watershed land ownership goal? – There is not a specific goal. KWD currently owns about 90% of the lands in its water supply watershed.
- Are water conservation measures used, especially during drought conditions like last summer. Mike indicated that really hasn't been an issue as they had adequate supply and used water from Bell Marsh to re-fill other supply areas when needed.
- A previous meeting focused on infrastructure and highlighted the possibility of adding fish passage at Bell Marsh Reservoir and Boulter Pond, in particular, to provide access to quality fish habitat that currently isn't available. Is that a possibility? Mike indicated that could be possible but noted that only Bell Marsh has a constant discharge that would provide flow into Smelt Brook for fish passage. For much of the year, there is no overflow from Boulter Pond into Bass Cove.
  - Karl noted there are National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants for fish passage and riparian habitat restoration projects.

➤ **Resource Protection Program – Gary Stevens, Resource Protection Manager, York Water District**

Gary gave an overview of the watershed patrol program and how it evolved over the years. He started patrolling the York Water District lands to observe activities and interact with users. By 2004, he was part of the police department, and his patrols covered Kittery Water District lands too. In 2005 IFW ATV patrol grants were awarded annually and allows patrols outside the water district lands onto MtA lands. The goals of the patrols have been to control how the lands are used to keep recreation options available on the lands. He focuses largely on education and positive interactions when speaking with users. He noted from the 1990s to today the overall numbers of users are about the same, though the types of recreation activities have changed. Recently there's more passive recreation and fewer ATVs. Gary distributed a sample patrol log that he provides after each patrol. It includes the number of people, types of recreation, number of cars, areas patrolled, etc. and a narrative description of patrol

findings and interactions. He also distributed the YWD/KWD brochure that includes a trail map and the rules of use:

<http://www.yorkrivermaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/YWD-KWD-Watershed-Protection-Area-Rules-of-Use-2017.pdf>

Questions, comments, and additional discussion:

- Chuck Ott noted the importance of self-governance in resource protection and commended Gary and the Resource Protection Program for their approach and what they've been able to accomplish. Gary reiterated that the education piece is so important to open people's eyes to why their actions matter and why certain activities are not allowed.
- What is biggest threat to water supply? – Recreation activities, especially camp fires and swimming.
- Trail work has been a priority. Trails have been moved to avoid stream impacts, built better, and used culverts at stream crossings.
- YWD noted that they have an 80-100 acre property that is in the York River watershed (part of Scituate Pond drainage area); the rest of their lands are outside the watershed.
- Wildlife was discussed – Geese present a water quality problem. YWD/KWD has a permit to remove/eliminate geese. Beavers are a problem at all water supply ponds. Hunting is allowed on watershed lands but overall hunting numbers are down. Bears are back in the watershed. Moose generally are not recently.
- Most common infractions involve dogs/animal control after the leash requirements began in 2010. Other common infractions include ATV issues (ATVs need to be permitted by the water districts to use the lands); people making new trails; and swimming.
- Common theme of the resource being "loved to death" came up. We need to articulate and explain the problem and protect against resource degradation.