

Tenants Harbor Marsh Restoration
St George Conservation Commission
Special Meeting
March 21, 2017

The Meeting convened at 10:00 AM at the Tenants Harbor marsh where the stream flows through the Route 131 culvert. After introductions and a brief review of the site the meeting was continued in the basement of the St George Town Office. Present Were: Ben Matthews, Watershed Restoration Specialist The Nature Conservancy; Mark Jordan, Jordan Environmental Engineering; Claire Enterline, Maine Coastal Program; Craig King, Maine Department of Marine Resources (MDMR); Toby Bonney, MDMR; Nate Gray, MDMR; Alison England, Science Teacher St George Municipal School; Ryan LeShane, St George Conservation Commission; Joss Coggeshall St George CC and Leslie Hyde St George CC. Alison had to leave early to return to her class.

Les reviewed the purpose of the meeting as to consider the recommendations of a June 2016 report on fish restoration by St George grade 8-science class and determine next steps. (The St George student Alewife report and Summer Camp Report are posted on the St George Town website under: documents, conservation commission, #10 Alewife Camp Projects 2016: <http://www.stgeorgemaine.com/documents.html>). The group was reminded that in the fall of 2015 a state of the art "fish friendly" culvert was installed by DOT to replace the "hanging" metal culvert and that in the spring of 2016 Alewives, Smelt and Elvers were all reported to be swimming upstream toward the Marsh through the new culvert. This good news was tempered by the 2016 spring low water flow and the challenges alewives had in negotiating the approximately 100-foot stretch of stream from the upstream side of the culvert and over the old dam holding backwater to the marsh.

Discussion:

One of the student suggestions was raise the level of the marsh in order to provide for more habitats and create the option of possible water release during a dry spring. This option was discouraged for several reasons. Raising the level of the dam would increase stream velocity between the culvert and the dam making it more challenging for alewives to get into the marsh. It was also suggested that securing funding for the project would be more difficult as building dams is not a priority.

Another student suggestion in the report was to create a series of pools for the resting and gathering of fish as they migrate into the marsh. All agreed with this recommendation. It was felt that this could be accomplished by arranging rocks and gravel so as to create a natural streambed featuring a series of weirs from the upstream side of the culvert up to the marsh. It was agreed that the goal was stream habitat restoration. Both smelt and alewife habitat restoration should be part of the plan as the culvert's gravel bottom and streambed up to the marsh outlet are prime smelt habitat.

The restoration work would require an engineered plan and need to be approved by the appropriate agencies (permit by rule) including Town planning board, DMR, IF&W with

a review by State Historic Preservation and the Army Core of Engineers. It was suggested that a "conceptual design" engineering plan (rather than a full blown engineered plan) may be sufficient as the project is relatively simple. It was also agreed that a landscape beautification plan should be created for the Town owned area surrounding the marsh outlet. The plan would enhance the stream and marsh habitat restoration. Elements of the landscape plan should include designated public parking, access by the fire department trucks to the marsh water pipe, removal of invasive plants, plantings of native plants and public access pathways to the marsh and along the stream. The engineered stream design might be part of the broader landscape design.

It was suggested that the costs of the project could be kept down if local contractors, landscape designers and volunteers could help. Volunteer time can be counted as a match for grant funding. Claire suggested that available Coastal Community Grants can help with planning and design, but require a proposal and this year's deadline is the end of March. This funding is presently being proposed for cutting and may not be available next year. These funds also require that the Town have an approved comprehensive plan (contact Phil Carey at Maine Municipal Planning Assistance). TNC has a modest amount of funding and could help this year with technical assistance and engineering design. The CC is requesting a modest amount for the restoration effort in the 2017 budget to be voted on at Town Meeting in May. Other funds may be available for actual construction. Claire suggested we contact Slade Moore, Coastal Habitat Manager for help with project management. August through November is considered the best times to do stream restoration work.

Next Steps:

- CC members to contact Town code enforcement officer regarding PB requirements.
- CC members to prepare a listing of possible Town construction contractors, landscape designers and volunteers who might help with this project.
- CC to contact Slade Moore regarding project management and funding sources.
- CC to contact DOT regarding engineering specifications from their culvert design work.
- CC to contact State Historic Preservation regarding their possible interest.
- DMR to confirm the upstream stretch of water above culvert as important smelt habitat.
- TNC to review and decide their level of support for this project and inform CC.
- Ben Matthews and Mark Jordan suggested they may be able to help with preliminary design and planning.

All expressed enthusiasm for the project and offered to help as appropriate.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie C. Hyde