

PRESUMPSCOT RIVER YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS



Background and Vision

In 2006, the Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition and the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership received EPA funding to implement the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative, a comprehensive project aimed at addressing existing sources of water quality degradation and fostering land stewardship within the Presumpscot River watershed.



The Presumpscot River Youth Conservation Corps was formed as part of this initiative to establish a team of area youth stewards dedicated to water quality improvement projects along the Presumpscot River and its tributaries.

Participating communities which lie partially within the watershed include Buxton, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gorham, Gray, North Yarmouth, Portland, Standish, Westbrook, Windham, and Yarmouth.

What is a Youth Conservation Corps or YCC?

The YCC model has been successfully adopted to protect and improve water quality in several watersheds throughout Maine. YCC staff provide free technical assistance, labor and education to help address a wide range of pollution sources.

A Technical Director oversees all aspects of the program including permitting, publicity, hiring and working with landowners to plan projects. Crew leaders supervise 5-person teams and make sure that projects are installed properly and safely. Local high school students are hired as crew members and work through the summer to plant vegetation, clean out culverts and ditches, and install other conservation practices.

During the pilot phase of the PRYCC in 2006 and 2007, some construction materials and plantings may be paid for through the Presumpscot Watershed Initiative. In 2008 and beyond, labor will remain free while landowners will be asked to share the cost of materials and supplies.



Why start up a YCC in the Presumpscot River Watershed?

◆ Despite recent improvements, water quality in the river remains degraded. As the river is cleaned up, development along the shoreline is resulting in a loss of vegetated buffers alongside rivers and streams. Increased runoff and erosion has altered stream channels continues to degrade fisheries habitat. The PRYCC will work to reverse these impacts.

◆ An active coalition of partners is in place to guide watershed improvement projects. The Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition is made up of more than a dozen government and private organizations concerned with improving fisheries, mitigating impacts from watershed development, and preserving natural areas along the river. Several studies have identified specific problem areas for improvement. Referring to the *Presumpscot Plan*, the PRWC will guide the YCC toward high priority improvement efforts.

PRYCC Organizing Committee:
Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition
Casco Bay Estuary Partnership
Cumberland County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Presumpscot River Watch
Maine DEP

◆ YCC's promote stewardship among community members. YCC projects yield tangible water quality benefits. Organizers also rave that YCC's are an effective way to raise awareness, energize communities and inspire local youth to become environmental leaders.

What can you do to help?

◆ Invite the Technical Director to assess erosion issues or buffer opportunities on your property and suggest solutions.

- ◆ Provide in-kind services by volunteering or donating needed equipment. Your support will be recognized in press releases and outreach. Some of our specific needs include:
- ◇ Tools and equipment, particularly heavy duty wheelbarrows, metal rakes, trowels, and a trailer.
 - ◇ Native trees and shrubs such as blueberry, white pine, oaks and maples for planting riparian buffers.
 - ◇ Erosion control materials such as conservation seed mix, hay bales, and mulch.
 - ◇ 4-6 inch rip rap, crushed stone, and loam.

