



WINTER NEWSLETTER 2005

Volume 13 Number 3

## OUR GOALS

**To create** a 30-mile network of multi-use trails within Greater Portland.

**To serve** as a public advocate for the protection of and access to natural places within the region.

**To encourage** the participation of neighborhoods, schools and the business community in trail use and stewardship.

# Thompson's Point River Walk: The Next Big Thing?

BY BOB KRUG

*A seldom remarked characteristic of Portland Trails is its frequent generation of impossible dreams that capture the imagination. To wit –*

- **A trail from the Old Port all the way around the Eastern Prom? Too many competing interests. Too political. Can't be done.**
- **A 3.5 mile trail around Back Cove? It will be fought every inch of the way. Forget it.**
- **A trail under I-295 to connect Eastern Prom to Back Cove? That's a tidal channel. It would cost a mint.**
- **A million dollars to create what? A Presumpscot River Preserve? You're kidding, aren't you?**

All of these impossible dreams have become realities. So –

- **A water-level trail that connects the Fore River Trail to West Commercial Street and the Harbor Walk? Will cost 300K. Will have to span the inlet between Thompson's Point and the I-295 bridge peninsula. Lots of partnering required plus lengthy permitting.**

We say, why not? We already have the dreamers in place.

This latest dream was revealed to the general public in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* on October 3. In the Outdoors section, staff writer Deirdre Fleming described a walk along the Fore River with Tony Donovan, a Portland Trails Trustee and a strong candidate for the Chief Dreamer in the proposed project. Tony sees the Thompson's Point Trail as the major missing piece in our urban trails network. First of all, its construction would create a water-level route around the Portland Peninsula. One could walk from the Westbrook end of the Stroudwater Trail to its terminus on outer Congress Street, down Congress Street to the Fore River Trail and its planned extension, then to the Thompson's Point Trail, on to the Harbor Walk, Eastern Prom and Back Cove.

A second benefit is that a Thompson's Point Trail would provide pedestrian and bicycle access to some truly beautiful areas of the city that cannot easily (or legally) be reached by any land route. And it would provide a connection to the bus/rail transportation center, the I-295 Connector, and to the Libbytown neighborhood, which is badly in need of pedestrian-friendly development. So, in addition to the direct benefit of increasing our supply of areas for recreation and non-motorized movement of people, the project could have long-term economic benefit for areas of the city that are currently left out of economic growth.

The engineering analysis is essentially complete, thanks to a second Trustee-Dreamer, Brent Bridges, a.k.a. Senior Vice President of Woodward and Curran. Some of the necessary partners are on board (unofficially at this point). What else do we need in order to move forward? We need to –

- develop and execute a plan to raise \$300K,
- sign formal agreements with all partners (including easements),
- get the permitting,
- build it.

Most of all, we need more people who want to follow a dream. We wait with open arms. ♡

## Yes! to Youth Produces TV PSA for Portland Trails

BY MARC HILLS

YES! TO YOUTH RECENTLY PARTNERED with Portland Trails to produce a broadcast quality Public Service Advertisement (PSA) for local television markets. A non-profit organization, Yes! to Youth creates multi-dimensional education opportunities for Maine students in grades 4-12. The organization promotes hands-on, creative skill-building in a variety of fields, including media communications, to prepare Maine students for college and beyond.

The two minute video spot, featuring an interview with Laura Newman, PT's Education and Outreach Coordinator, is accompanied by scenic footage of local projects, including the Stroudwater and Eastern Prom trails. The PSA highlights Portland Trails' mission and some of our current projects.

The project actually began with an unsolicited offer to Portland Trails, says Dudley Davis, Yes! to Youth's Founder and Executive Director. After successfully using Horizon Foundation support to make a lengthy video for Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute, Yes! To Youth decided, as Davis explains, "to bring another environmental organization to the proposal. And Portland Trails was a perfect fit." Yes! To Youth made Trails an offer that we couldn't refuse.

"The PSA is a powerful public relations and fundraising tool; it really shows the power of video," observes Davis, adding: "People just can't believe that kids produced this."

By all accounts, the project was a win-win situation for both organizations. "Our kids get hands-on experience working with cutting edge communications technology," says Davis. "And Portland Trails gets tremendous value with this video. Done privately, a PSA can cost thousands of dollars to produce."

As an added bonus, the Portland Trails PSA is available on the internet as a streaming video courtesy of Yes! to Youth's own web server. Interested readers can view it and other Yes! to Youth productions by linking to: <http://www.yestoyouth.org/WebStreaming.asp>. Look for the Portland Trails link under the Yes! TV tab.

## Report from the Back Cove Trail

BY SARAH CUSHMAN

*I'm no lover of winter. Short days, sun that barely makes it over the rooftops, shoulder-clenching drafts, dry skin — how delightful. I might have been born and raised in the Mid-Coast area, but my blood has tropical longings.*

But two years ago, I discovered the cure for the interminable Maine winter. To get some exercise, I started to use the Eastern Promenade and Back Cove Trails to commute to work on foot. I live on Munjoy Hill and work as a mechanic at Young's Service Center on Forest Avenue. Today, I continue to throw my lunch in my daypack, pull on some snowpants and sneakers and head off into the winter morning.

If you had told me at sixteen I'd be wearing snowpants around town at age 32, I would have *just died*. But I love them! As a friend says, the wind can whip up its own little weather system on the Back Cove — and snowpants (plus a well wrapped scarf) makes all the difference in comfort. The snow itself is generally minimal on the trails, except just after storms. The freeze-thaw effect on what little is there can sometimes make for dicey walking, but there is usually a crusty snow pack on the sides to dig into. These small challenges aside, it feels liberating to be out there and not trapped indoors by outside temperatures.



I enjoy walking my route the other three seasons, but there's something about winter. Maybe it's because I experience the changes in light more tangibly. In the morning, I walk down to the Eastern Prom into the sun. The sun! And most afternoons, my husband jogs out to meet me at about 4:15 at the parking lot across from Hannaford's. As we walk home together in January we notice the incremental lengthening (slooooooww, but it exists!) of the days. Of course, the mournful beauty of late afternoon light in winter is something to behold in and of itself. And I even enjoy the early nights in December when the last rays have burned out in the western sky and we can see the first stars above the city lights.

Then there is the company of winter bird life along the trails. As cold sets in and my fellow exercisers hit their Stairmasters, several species of sea ducks arrive to winter over on the Back Cove. Each morning and evening I witness a different stage of the tide — and the varying bird activity that accompanies it. In addition to the usual gulls and mallards, there are eiders, mergansers, and goldeneyes, as well as the little guys I saw for the first time this season last Monday: the buffleheads. The smallest of the diving ducks, dear and perky; they dip their heads briefly and — *blip!* — disappear under the surface. Even though it means winter has truly arrived, I find I am happy to welcome them back.

# Onward to 2005

**F**OR ALL OF US ASSOCIATED WITH PORTLAND TRAILS, this time of year is filled with anticipation. We are in the midst of making our plans for next year's trail and schoolground projects, and our annual appeal for member support is underway. These final weeks of 2004 will determine what Portland Trails will be able to accomplish in 2005 and beyond.

If we are able to conclude our 2004 Annual Appeal successfully, we anticipate that 2005 will be a watershed year for Portland Trails and our growing network of open spaces, trails and greenways. Some planned highlights for 2005 include:

PT will hire a schoolground project assistant in 2005 to help with Portland Trails' anticipated lineup of schoolground greening projects. Laura Newman and Nan Cumming have secured three grants for Portland Trails to fund an unprecedented level of schoolyard projects in 2005. Area schoolchildren and our communities will benefit from these efforts for years to come.

PT will expand outreach efforts to promote stewardship of our trails and greenways, encourage physical activity and trail usage, and increase individual and corporate support of Portland Trails' mission. Portland Trails' 2005 budget will provide for additional staff time for these activities. Isabel Aley, our Development and Communications Assistant, will be taking on this challenge to help Portland Trails grow our membership and improve the health of our communities.

PT will add a part-time, year-round trail construction and maintenance staffer to oversee maintenance of trails and construction planning. The estimable Jaime Parker has capably led our trail construction efforts for several years. However, funding for his efforts has been on a project-by-project basis. As a result, we have not been able to use his skills as often as needed to respond to the many trail maintenance issues identified by trail users and Bud Quinn, our venerable trail steward. Jaime's expanded role will allow us to better maintain our trail network. This milestone in Portland Trails' development is made possible via the generosity of our Adopt-A-Trail partners — Gorham Savings Bank, L.L. Bean, Northern Utilities, UnumProvident Corporation, Woodward & Curran, and Wright Express.

PT will undertake four to six new trail construction projects for 2005. The specific lineup has not yet been finalized but will likely include an extension of the Fore River Trail, the construction of the Starbird Lane Trail near the Fore River Sanctuary in Portland, and several other trail projects that are actively being planned for 2005 and await final funding and permitting considerations.

All of these plans are made possible by you, our individual members, our Adopt-A-Trail partners, and our corporate and foundation supporters. But before we can look toward 2005, we need to successfully conclude 2004. We hope we can count on your support of our 2004 Annual Appeal.



Jeff Sommer

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JEFF SOMMER  
*President, Board of Trustees*

# NEWS FROM MILE 0.0



Photo: Rob Levin

**The Stroudwater “Corner,” now saved as a result of a partnership with the Stroudwater Village Association, Portland Trails, and the City of Portland.**

◆ In 2003, the **Campaign for the Corner** committee of the **Stroudwater Village Association** completed its very successful campaign to purchase the property at 1305 Westbrook Street, near the corner of Congress Street. The parcel is an important part of the scenic and historic quality of the Stroudwater neighborhood—and open space that Portland Trails agreed needed to be preserved. When the committee began their project they asked Portland Trails to assist by acting as the non-profit “fiscal agent” for the campaign, taking responsibility for financial management of the fund-raising effort.

On November 10, Portland Trails, the SVA, and the City of Portland officially concluded the campaign. As a result of this great partnership, the City of Portland holds the land, Portland Trails holds a conservation easement that will ensure that the parcel remains undeveloped, and the SVA will take on stewardship responsibilities. The community will continue to use the space for picnics and other social events. Modest improvements like benches and a drinking fountain are in the works.

◆ Portland Trails has joined forces with the **Friends of the Ballpark District**. We want to help them improve walkability in Portland’s Libbytown neighborhood by creating trail connections and improving pedestrian safety. Libbytown extends south of Brighton Avenue to Thompson’s Point and boasts Hadlock Field as one of its primary attractions.

The Friends have already begun neighborhood improvements by cleaning up the utilities building under the old rail bridge on Park Avenue near Hadlock Field. Students at the Maine College of Art are on board to create murals and other art installations in the area. The Friends of the Ballpark is a neighborhood organization made up of local businesses, including the Doubletree Hotel and Hood Dairy, as well as schools and residents who are all working together to improve their community. They are ably led by Kim Strondak, Director of Sales at the Fairfield Inn. As the group begins fundraising, Portland Trails has agreed to be their fiscal sponsor. So watch for more great work in Libbytown!

For more information about the Friends, contact Kim Strondak at 871-0611 Ext 178 or [kstrondak@paramounthotelgroup.com](mailto:kstrondak@paramounthotelgroup.com)



Photo: EPA New England

**Nan and Laura receive the “big” check.**

◆ On October 26, Robert Varney, Regional Administrator of **EPA New England** presented Laura Newman and Nan Cumming with a check for \$30,000. The award was part of EPA’s “Healthy Communities” grant program, and will support Portland Trails’ schoolground greening initiative. The press conference took place at Portland’s Nathan Clifford School, one of several schools that will benefit from the program.

# Portland Trails' Map and Trail Guide Class

**N**INE SPECIAL PORTLAND TRAILS VOLUNTEERS can tell you the number of benches to be found along the Eastern Prom and the number of parking spaces near the Fore River Trail. They even know where to find the closest restroom when you're out on the Stroudwater Trail.

Their names are Jerry Gordon, Peg Tierney, Libby Hyatt, Lois Kahn, Marcia Keyes, Richard Leighton, Vivian Turcott, Laura Tyrrell, and Vicki Webster. They know the finer points of Portland's trails because they participated in our eight-week "Service Learning: Portland Trails' Map and Guide Project" with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute this fall. Their goal was to update and improve our trail map and to have fun while they were at it. We're happy to report that they succeeded admirably.

Supplied with current trail maps, city maps and lists of criteria for assessing the trails, the nine divided into teams and headed out. They checked bus and auto routes for accuracy. (This is a thoughtful map – not only does it provide bountiful information about the trails, but also identifies public transportation routes to get you there). They inventoried trail amenities, including those rest rooms, benches and picnic facilities. As they walked the trails, they noted locations for additional benches. Points of interest were updated, as well as descriptions of the type of material a walker, hiker or biker would encounter — be it gravel, hardtop or soil, and whether the trail had a slope. Thoughtful to the end, the teams listed the number of parking spaces per trailhead.

The class also met with Steve Bushey and Angela Saeth at Map Adventures, the cartography group responsible for incorporating the new data into the 2005 edition of the Portland Trail Map and Guide. At Map Adventures the class was privy to the skill, technological savvy and art that goes into creating maps – those compact colorful works teeming with information.

Vicki, Laura, Vivian, Richard, Marcia, Lois, Libby, Peg and Jerry spill over with what they learned and how much they enjoyed it. They chuckle about those among them who have the uncanny ability to close a map along its original folds. They talk about the wildlife they saw, the exercise they got, the river walks and wooded trails that make you forget you're in the city. Participant Lois Kahn speaks for the group when she says, "It was a great experience, and opened my eyes to more of what Portland has to offer."

Next spring when you're standing on the trailhead, map in hand, the sun warming you as it hasn't done in months, think of Vicki, Laura, Vivian, Richard, Marcia, Lois, Libby, Peg and Jerry, and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and thank them for their contribution to the 2005 version of the Portland Trails Map and Trail Guide. We couldn't have done it without them. ☺



Laura Tyrrell, a member of the OLLI class, does field research on the South Portland Greenbelt.

Photo: Vivian Turcott

## SAVE THE DATES!

Monday, January 24  
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

### Portland Trails Annual Meeting, "Report from the Waterfront"

Our annual meetings are always lively and interesting and this year will be no exception! Along with reports on Portland Trails' accomplishments in 2004 and election of our new board members, Jeff Monroe, Director of Ports and Transportation for the City of Portland, will update us on development on the City's eastern waterfront. Come learn how these changes will impact the trail network—and the city in general!

At the City of Portland Department of Ports & Transportation, 40 Commercial Street, Portland.

Friday, April 29  
5:30 – 9:00 p.m.

## HAPPY TRAILS

### Big Bash and Silent Auction



Last year's auction was a huge success, so join us again for bidding on over 250 silent auction items, some delicious hors d'oeuvres, and live bluegrass music with the Jerks of Grass.

At the Pavilion, 188 Middle Street, Portland.



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**Guest Editorial** by Alan Caron, *President, GrowSmart Maine*

# Sprawl, Smart Growth and Maine's Future

**S**PRAWL IS CHANGING THE FACE OF MAINE before our eyes—relentlessly transforming Maine from a place of small cities, towns, walkable neighborhoods and the slow pace of rural life to something increasingly like our crowded neighbors to the south. If we're going to stop sprawl and maintain our unique and special qualities, the time to act is now!

GrowSmart Maine, a non-profit organization with offices in the restored Sparhawk Mill in Yarmouth, is poised to become a large and effective organization that will help our state promote smart growth instead of inefficient, sprawling development. With initial support from 300 founding members, corporate donors, state agencies and visionary foundations, we have accomplished much since our launch in 2002, including the publication of numerous technical briefs and a monthly newsletter on smart growth, and participation in a determination of the ability of Maine's Comprehensive Plans to manage future growth in the state.

Looking ahead to 2005 is exciting, with both expansion of current activities and new projects being unveiled. In January, we will begin a multi-year project that will focus the best smart growth talent, energy and information in the state on a single Maine town. This

**Model Town Project** will offer a full range of tools to better manage growth and protect quality of life. We anticipate that the town will become a model and an inspiration for others around the state, and that the program will be expanded to other communities.

As the **2005 Legislature** gets underway, we will be mobilizing our supporters, and working with other organizations, Governor Baldacci's administration and Legislative leaders from both parties,

to promote new ways to manage growth, assist towns in changing their approaches, encourage more regional cooperation and make the critical link between sprawl, its growing impact on local property taxes and our economic future.

Also in the New Year, we will unveil "**Sprawl and the Economy**" — a major study on the links between sprawl, the growing cost of local and state government, and Maine's ability to compete for the jobs of tomorrow. The study, with former Governor Angus King as its spokesperson, will culminate with a blueprint for action.

For practical examples and inspiration, please visit our web site: [www.growsmartmaine.org](http://www.growsmartmaine.org) GrowSmart Maine is the only statewide organization focused on stopping sprawl in Maine.

