



The Obligate

Maine Association of Wetland Scientists
January 2000
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President's Message

Now that the first millennium is nearly over, people everywhere are anxiously awaiting a new era. The wetland community in Maine, in particular, has another reason to be excited. MAWS will very soon enter the cyber world with the opening of our new web site just days away. Karen Bolstridge and her clever subcommittee deserve a heaping amount of congratulations for making the web site of ours a reality. (I wonder how many founding members envisioned, back in 1990 when the first organizational meeting for a "Maine Association of Wetland Scientists" was scheduled, that it would have a vehicle on the internet superhighway to publicize ourselves in such a grandiose manner to not only members in Maine and New Hampshire, but also connect us to the whole world! Any comments, Steve?)

We have accomplished many good things since the formal establishment of MAWS back in 1991. Through MAWS, we have all gotten to know one another and, by exchanging ideas and opinions via our well-attended programs, we have all increased our skills in identifying and managing our wetland resources. We have earned a solid reputation as spokespersons for wetland policy issues in the state, and state and federal regulatory agencies regularly seek our opinions. We've had our share of battles through the years (the "soil wars" come immediately to mind), but I think these experiences have helped MAWS grow and allowed each of us to become better practitioners of wetland science. Our newsletter, *The*

OBLIGATE, has become a standard by which other professional groups try to model their own newsletters. We all look forward to receiving the next edition for the information it disseminates, and wonder why it is not sent out more often. Maybe we can direct Dave to make it a monthly.

By reviewing historic editions of *The OBLIGATE* (and its predecessor mailings) through the years, I have noticed that certain wetland related issues seem to get recycled from time to time. One is the issue of wetland certification.

Certification was a topic for discussion during the first organizational meeting back in 1990 and, based on a follow-up questionnaire, it was considered a worthy long-term goal of MAWS. This issue was tabled in 1991 when members realized how daunting it would be to persuade the state legislature to adopt yet another certification program. In 1993, the wetland certification issue turned national when the Army Corps of Engineers tried to establish a "Wetland Delineator Certification Program" (WDCP). This program kick-started another MAWS survey to once again determine our thoughts on the issue. Accordingly, a new questionnaire was mailed to members and others involved with the land planning industry, and once again results overwhelmingly supported (85% and 74%, respectively) the need for establishing a wetlands certification program in Maine. However, the high cost of initiating a certification program was no less imposing than ever. Alternatively, piggybacking onto the WDCP was prohibitively expensive and technically unrepresentative to Maine conditions since the nearest training course was in Maryland. Having MAWS sponsor a less expensive training based on the WDCP was also discussed. However, the WDCP turned out to be exasperatingly slow in getting formally established, and by 1996, the Corps put the project to bed.

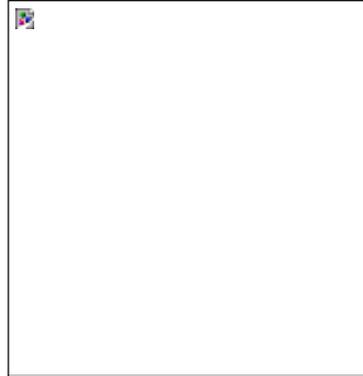
So why am I dragging this topic into polite company again?

One of the issues that the DEP brought to our attention last year was the apparent decline in the quality of data forms, which led to a discussion of whether the overall quality of wetland investigations followed the same trend. Meanwhile, the DEP Consulting Professionals Task Force has been discussing related wetland issues, including the consistency of wetland delineations submitted to the DEP, and the qualifications of individuals who perform wetland investigations. For these reasons, MAWS will be conducting fundamental workshops in various areas of wetland science this year. More information regarding upcoming workshops can be found elsewhere in this edition.

I do not expect these workshops, by themselves, will completely resolve this issue. I do expect, however, that as individuals each and every one of us can meet high standards of professionalism in the wetlands profession by acquiring some kind of certification relevant to wetland science. Certainly, an abundance of various certification programs exist out there that are relevant to wetland science. Examples include the "PWS" (awarded to professional wetland scientists by the Society of Wetland Scientists); "CSS" and "CG" (awarded to certified soil scientists and certified geologists, respectively, by the State of Maine); "CSS" and "CWS" (awarded to certified soil scientists and certified wetland scientists, respectively, by the State of New Hampshire); and "CWB" (awarded to certified wildlife biologists by The Wildlife Society).

Perhaps it is too idealistic to expect statewide certification in wetland science to amount to anything more than a long-term goal, but MAWS should still work long and hard to attain this goal. Meanwhile, let's realize that a more realistic, attainable, second-best goal is for each of us to strive for certification by one of the above-named programs. After all, if we can be on the web, we can become certified.

Mr. Don Phillips, President



1999 Executive Committee Directory

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2000 Executive Committee Nominees

The offices of President-Elect, Treasurer, Membership Chair, and Ethics Chair are up for election in 2000. An election will be held at the Wednesday, February 23, 2000 business meeting in Augusta. The slate of candidates is given below. As always, nominations will be accepted from the floor.

President-Elect (1 yr.) - Jim Boyle (Boyle Associates)

Treasurer (2 yr.) - Curt Bohlen (Bates College)

Membership Chair (2 yr) - Karol Worden (Woodlot Alternatives)

Ethics Chair (2 yr) - Alan Haberstock (Kleinschmidt Associates) or Lauren Stockwell (Eco-Analysts)

MAWS Meeting Notes

Annual Winter Meeting

Wednesday, February 24, 1999

Steve Pelletier, President, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Approximately 40-45 members in attendance. Steve opened the meeting by requesting the committee reports.

Committee Reports:

Don Phillips, President-elect

Don Phillips, President-elect, reviewed the minutes of the fall meeting by reading from the latest edition of *The OBLIGATE*.

Dave Cowan, "Federal and State Wetland Delineation Standards" Subcommittee Chair, summarized the February 9, 1999 meeting at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) in Augusta. The matter of delineation standards was discussed and found to be very broad; the subcommittee refocused by defining particular issues of concern. These included:

What is the appropriate level of documentation, which will satisfy the DEP?

What is the appropriate level of investigation, which will satisfy the DEP?

What is the appropriate level of investigation on a scientific level?

The question "What is the time limitation of a wetland delineation?" was asked from the floor. Bob Stratton, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, answered by stating the MEDEP expects to formalize an answer shortly and may need to discuss this with the subcommittee.

MAWS Members and MEDEP agreed that the most important issue in this matter is Consistency

For more information call Dave Cowan at (207) 775-4495 or see Subcommittee report in this newsletter.

Jim Boyle, Chairperson of the Legislative Committee, reviewed the Legislative information that appeared in the most recent edition of the *OBLIGATE*. Membership agreed, by show of hands, that the Executive Committee would draft a letter in support. (The Executive Committee later assigned this project to Jim Boyle).

Paul Corey, Chairperson of the Membership Committee, reported MAWS membership at 123 members, 51 of which are Affiliate Members. The logistical problem of tracking members who are up to date on their yearly dues was discussed and a routing path for dues was settled upon. In addition, Committee Members duties were discussed and it was decided that within 30 days the Executive committee would write "job descriptions" to be supplied to incoming Committee Members so they would know their full duties. It is the hope that these outlines will help prevent important items from falling through the cracks.

Dale Brewer, Treasurer, reported on MAWS Budget.

Balance:

February 1997 \$4040.32

February 1998 \$3328.88

Projected 2000 \$1408.88

Marcia Spencer Famous, Chairperson of the Program Committee, asked for program ideas.

Peter Tischbein, "Abuse of the 4300 Ft²-Exemption" Subcommittee Chair, summarized the meeting held with MEDEP and Al Frick on perceived abuses to the exemption. Jeff Madore of the MEDEP is working on the problem and Bob Stratton (MEDEP) urged members to report observed cases of abuse anonymously to the MEDEP.

Karen Bolstridge, Secretary and Website Subcommittee Chair, reviewed the MAWS website and briefly outlined the proposed contents of the site. The site will include six sections: a Top page, a Bylaws page, a Membership page including Membership Forms, a Newsletter page, a Meetings, News and Links page and a Membership Bulletin Board page. Estimated completion time is two to three months. Volunteers for the committee were requested and received. Our thanks are extended to those volunteers.

Other important discussions:

Steve Pelletier

Steve Pelletier discussed the need to bring new talent to the Executive Committee and stated that duties for nominating new people should fall onto a sub-committee. A volunteer to head this committee was asked for and received. Our thanks are extended to Richard Bostwick, our new Nominating Subcommittee Chair.

Dave Moyse discussed and encouraged more communication between MAWS and the Maine Association of Site Evaluators (MASE) in regards to eliminating coinciding dates of Annual Meetings.

Wende Mahaney (FWS) was asked about the Programmatic General Permit (PGP) and its upcoming expiration date. Wende stated that she expects the document to be re-issued quietly.

Election Results:

President-elect; Peter Tischbein

Secretary; Karen Bolstridge

Program Chair; Colen Peters

Legislative Chair; Gary Emond

Speakers:

Gail Klingerman, ACOE, Mitigation Guidance in New England.

Gail Klingerman, ACOE, Mitigation Guidance in New England. Gail Klingerman gave a presentation responding to suggestions that guidance to consultants and developers often varies in mitigation monitoring requirements and that monitoring reports often contain unnecessary and costly information. As a result, the CORP has developed Guidelines for Mitigation Projects. These guidelines were discussed and can be obtained from the ACOE.

Sylvia Michaud, DOT, See the latest edition of *The OBLIGATE*.

Brad Beeler, Maine Technical Source, The use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in Wetland Mapping. Mr. Beeler demonstrated the use of the Trimble PRO-XR global positioning system and discussed the accuracy of using GPS data to locate wetland boundary points on a map. Brad explained that the satellites used in GPS technology are controlled by the Department of Defense (DOD) and that there are 27 satellites, 24 in use and 3 spare. The satellites run in six orbits and make one orbit every 12 hours. Brad went on to explain that for the best accuracy differential corrections should be made to the collected data to minimize error. In addition, a discussion took place describing some sources of error and procedures to follow to minimize these errors. For further information on the use of GPS equipment in wetland delineations contact Brad at Maine Technical Sources.

Susanne Kynast, Stipend Winner from the University of Maine at Machias, How Snapping Turtles Disperse Through a Watershed. Susanne's presentation included an explanation of the genetic study performed on the snapping turtles in three watersheds, an explanation of the turtles migration strategies, a brief discussion on why the

population of snapping turtles may be in decline, and many interesting turtle facts.

Regulatory Agency Updates:

Mike Mullen, MEDEP

Mike Mullen, MEDEP, updated MAWS on recent MEDEP staffing changes and discussed beaver dam regulations.

Molly Docherty, Natural Areas Program, updated MAWS by stating that the Natural Areas Program is continuing in its efforts to update the Official list of Endangered & Threatened Plants in Maine. In addition, she discussed the Management of Invasive Non-Native Plants in Maine and Community Classifications with a look at Characterizing Maine's Landscape into Habitat Types.

Marcia Spencer-Famous, LURC, explained that LURC is continuing in the effort to make LURC wetland rules more consistent with MEDEP wetland rules.

Wende Mahaney, who spoke for Jay Clements, ACOE, explained that the latest version of the Programmatic General Permit (PGP) would soon be available.

Mark McCollough, DIFW, presented information on three pilot projects used to determine how effective the use of aerial photography is in locating vernal pools.

Liz Brown, State Planning Office, explained that the office is trying to prioritize the wetland list in an attempt to practically manage the State's wetland resources.

Wende Mahaney, FWS; Ken Elowe, IFW; Mike Mullen, MEDEP, Panel Discussion on the Pro's and Con's of preservation as a form of mitigating wetland impacts. The panel discussion revolved around the concept that wetland preservation in many cases does not result in a "no net-loss" of wetlands. Overall, it was noted that preservation could be effectively used as a secondary method of mitigation to complement a plan that does more to restore, enhance or create wetlands. The panelists left us with the message that preservation, which can include uplands, should be used as the "icing on the cake" not the whole cake.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:10

****MAWS would like to thank all the participants for their time and effort.****

Meeting outline respectfully submitted by Karen Bolstridge, Secretary

Executive Meeting Notes

Hi everyone. It's tough trying to schedule an Executive Meeting the first week of August. We're all in the field. Karen Bolstridge, Peter Tischbein and I were the only ones present. Anyway, here's what happened yesterday at Margarita's in Augusta. Meeting started at about 5:30 PM.

First order of business was to formally authorize Karen to pay a bill to Thorsten Zimmerman, the creator of our forthcoming website, in the amount of \$495.00. Upon discussion, we researched our notes from previous meetings to remind ourselves what the budget was for the website, as authorized by a vote of the members who attended the 1999 Annual Meeting last March. According to my notes, our budget for the website is \$1,000. Earlier in the year, we spent \$250.00, and with the latest invoice from Thorsten we have spent a total of \$750.00. Things are looking good on this front. Request for **Dale Brewer**: would you please reimburse Karen for

\$495.00 from the MAWS checkbook.

I handed out a flyer printed by the MAPSS President George Bakajza that announces the upcoming MAPSS/MAWS Workshop scheduled for Friday, September 17 in the Rangeley/Oquossoc region. This flyer is attached. Since this is the first of two joint workshops designed to improve our documentation skills in the field, I'd like this flyer to be distributed to the MAWS membership. Question for **Dave Cowan**: will the next newsletter be printed before August 17th ? If not, then I'd like **Cole Peters** to distribute this flyer (along with a map showing where the meeting will begin, which I'll fax down to you) to the membership sometime in the next two weeks. **Cole**, if for some reason you can't do this, let me know.

Karen put in another reminder for us to give her a bio and photograph of ourselves (the Executive Committee) for the website. Come on, everyone, she originally put in this request months ago but I understand most of us have ignored it to date. I'm not exactly all that photogenic myself and make a habit of not being in front of the business end of a camera (I tell everybody I'm wanted by the law in California), so if I can do it then so can't you.

I think it is time to start thinking about our Annual Meeting next March. I raised an issue about not having the meeting at the State Grange in Augusta. My reasons include the abundance of other places where we could have more professional surroundings, including a hot lunch, facilities for setting up slides (I always get a crimp in my neck from looking at the ceiling for slides at the Grange), better parking, etc. Drawbacks to having the Annual Meeting elsewhere, of course, is the expense. However, other professional meetings I attend seem not to have any problem asking for a fee of up to about \$25 per member (which generally covers lunch) to attend. Also, the question arose about where the meeting should be held. Portland area? Lewiston area? Augusta area? Where do most of our members live? Discussion included why not have the meeting at a real nice place, not simply in some city's local Comfort Inn, for example. Why not a seaside restaurant equipped to handle something like this, perhaps in the Boothbay area. And why not? **Cole**, I'd like to get your input on this.

Meeting adjourned after only one beer at about 6:30 PM.

Meeting outline respectfully submitted by Don Phillips.

Executive Committee Meeting

November 8, 1999

Started at 4:45 PM with Don Phillips, Cole Peters, Pete Tischbein, Steve Pelletier, Gary Emond, and Karen Bolstridge in attendance.

The discussions resulted with the following:

Our annual meeting will be February 23, 2000, at either the Senator or the Comfort Inn in Augusta, whichever can provide us with the best rates. Members will be charge \$15.00 for the day, the rest of the bill will be defrayed by MAWS. We will have two topics at the Meeting.

The Executive committee had many questions we want to ask the Membership, so Karen will collect the questions, make them into a questionnaire, and distribute them with the newsletter.

Executive Committee discussed making the VP, Prez and old Prez a two-year term. We will ask the Members.

Don Phillips will write a letter to DEP explaining MAWS's intent to review GPS "standards" and get back to them in 4-6 months. It was decided that the issue was too important to give them any sort of answer in one-month time frame.

Cole and Karen will help Dave Cowan with the newsletter.

Richard Bostwick will be contacted for the nominating of new Executive Members to be voted upon in February.

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Legislative and Regulatory Updates

Wetlands Legislative Update

by Gary Emond

This year was "fairly" quiet on the legislative front until recently. Specifically, the Maine Board of Environmental Protection (BEP) enacted changes to Chapter 305, Permit-By-Rule (PBR) Standards on June 1, 1999, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency promulgated a new set of rules regarding Phase II of their storm water program in October, 1999. And, as most of you are aware, the Army Corps administered state General Programmatic Permit 39 is up for renewal in October of this year.

At the state level, there were numerous changes to the PBR Standards. For the most part, many of the changes went uncontested with the exception of a couple. Section

9, Crossings (utility lines, pipes, and cables), and Section 10, Stream Crossings (bridges, culverts, and fords) were amended with stricter regulations. These changes made projects that involve multiple resource crossings ineligible under PBR, and required that such projects obtain individual permits under the Natural Resources Protection Act. These stricter standards sparked strong protest within the logging industry and forced closer examination of the changes. Currently, the DEP is in the process of changing the new Section 9 and 10 standards back to the way they were prior to June, 1999.

In October, 1999, the EPA enacted Phase II of the storm water program to enhance the control of storm water runoff from small municipalities in urbanized areas and small construction sites. Phase I of the program, which was promulgated in 1990, required that large municipal storm water systems, some industrial activities, and construction sites larger than five acres be permitted. Phase II will require that small municipal storm water systems (serving less than 100,000 customers) and small construction sites ranging from one to five acres obtain NPDES permits by March 10, 2003. The municipalities and construction projects that will be eligible for regulation under Phase II will have to comply with the Phase I rules.

Another major legislative issue that may have implications regarding Section 404 of the Clean Water Act is the renewal of General Permit 39. Currently, the ACOE is developing draft versions and distributing them to various resource agencies. Some of the major changes that are being considered may involve requiring the submittal of project notices to native tribal governments, a section that references vernal pool habitat, and an increase in the lower impact limit that triggers a multiple federal resource agency screening. These and any other potential changes are being closely examined at the regulatory level, and public notices soliciting comments may not be filed for several more months.

Now that I've sparked new excitement and revealed to all of you a new dimension to the wonderfully exciting world of environmental legislation, I leave you brimming with anticipation for the annual meeting where I will discuss the above topics in greater detail.

Wetland News

DEP Issues Guidance for Wetland Delineation Submittals

by Dave Cowan

Guidelines for the submittal of data forms and supporting documentation for wetland delineations are now being circulated by Maine DEP. The guidelines are intended to clarify DEP expectations for wetland delineations performed to meet the requirements of Tier I, Tier II and Tier III application review under NRPA. They were developed following the recommendations of an ad-hoc committee convened by MAWS to address concerns about inconsistencies in delineation documentation, delineation quality, and DEP requirements. The guidelines consist of a cover page (text reprinted below) followed by a copy of the delineation Performance Standards and sample plot forms issued by the New England Army Corps in 1995. A copy of the guidelines is now being included with blank permit applications provided by DEP. For further information contact Bob Stratton at Maine DEP, 287-6114.

MEDEP Wetland Delineation and Submittal Requirements

The following is intended to clarify wetland delineation and submittal requirements for projects under the Natural Resources Protection Act (38 MRSA, §§ 480-A et seq.) (NRPA) and the Maine Wetland Protection Rules (Chapter 310) (Wetland Rules). A common source of rejected wetland applications has been inadequate delineation materials. The Department hopes that this clarification will enable applicants and consultants to prepare more complete application submittals for regulatory

review. Failure to submit necessary information will result in rejection of the application or denial of the proposal. Applicants and consultants may contact the Department prior to application submittal to discuss the following requirements as they pertain to specific sites.

TIER III (full NRPA) applications involving freshwater or coastal wetlands must have wetland boundaries delineated by a qualified wetland professional according to the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual (Technical Report Y-87-1) as clarified in Performance Standards and Supplemental Definitions for use with the 1987 Corps Manual (August 1, 1995), and Version II of the Field Indicators For Identifying Hydric Soils In New England (New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, July 1998). The Performance Standards document and delineation sample plot log forms are included in this packet. Delineation sample plot logs including vegetation, soil, and hydrologic data must be submitted with the application and required wetland reports. Sample plots must be located in upland and wetland areas in close proximity to established boundaries in order to document the wetland scientist's boundary determinations. Ideally, the upland and wetland plot centers should be located within 15 feet of each other. The number and proximity of necessary sample plots is variable depending upon the wetland's size, complexity, integration with varying wetland types (emergent, scrub-shrub, forested, etc.), and other site specific characteristics, but a minimum of one upland and one wetland plot log must be completed and submitted. Sample plots are typically only necessary to characterize portions of a wetland proposed to be impacted and do not need to encompass entire extensive wetland areas that will not be impacted. Formal delineations must be conducted on each individual wetland and wetland type to be impacted. A site plan must be submitted showing wetland boundaries, types of wetlands, sample plot locations, the proposed impact area and development plan, dimensions of features, streams and other natural resources. In that natural areas are evolving resources, wetland boundary delineations that are more than a few years old or in extremely dynamic wetlands must be validated by a wetland scientist. Because delineations only describe conditions at the wetland boundary, the Wetland Rules (Section 9B) require a Site Characterization Report outlining the overall characteristics of the wetland, including water depths, vegetation, and fauna.

TIER II Freshwater Wetland applications must also have wetland boundaries delineated by a qualified wetland professional according to the information above. Sample plot logs do not need to be submitted with the application. However, the Department may require delineation logs to be submitted on some projects, depending upon the type of resources to be impacted, the amount of proposed impact, or the nature of the proposal.

TIER I Freshwater Wetland applications do not require wetland boundaries to be formally delineated. However, site plans are required that indicate the extent and types of wetlands involved, the proposed impact area and development plan, dimensions of features, streams and other natural resources.

All TIER Wetland applications must demonstrate that proposed wetland impacts have been avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable (NRPA 480-X.6, Wetland Rules Section 5). TIER II and III wetland applications must further address this through an Alternatives Analysis (Wetland Rules Section 9). Refer to the 1995 Performance Standards document, the NRPA, and the Wetland Rules for further guidance on wetland data and report requirements.

Stewart Fefer Named 1999 Recipient of Chuck Yeager Award for Natural Resource Conservation

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Stewart Fefer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Project Leader for the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, has been named the 1999 recipient of the Chuck Yeager Award - a prestigious award presented annually by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to recognize individuals for superior on-the-ground resource conservation achievements. The award is named for American test pilot Chuck Yeager whose career epitomizes scientific and technical achievement. A \$20,000 grant accompanying the award will be directed to conservation projects of Fefer's choice.

According to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Executive Director Amos Eno, "Stewart Fefer has worked tirelessly on behalf of nationally important fish and wildlife resources in coastal Maine. He has developed innovative partnerships with National Wildlife Refuges, state agencies, statewide conservation groups, land trusts and angling clubs to restore and permanently protect coastal nesting islands, coastal wetlands, and rivers harboring Atlantic salmon and other migratory fish."

By integrating the collective strengths of all conservation partners, and by retaining a flexible, voluntary approach to conservation, Fefer has translated his ambitious vision for coastal Maine into thousands of acres of restored and protected habitat for waterbirds, migratory fish, and endangered species. Since 1991, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, led by Fefer, has played an active role in partnerships to:

permanently protect 31 coastal nesting islands;

permanently protect 12,500 acres of coastal wetlands, upland buffers, and riparian habitat;

restore nesting seabird habitat on 12 islands;

restore 51 wetlands;

remove five dams that once blocked migratory fish; and

reduce sedimentation to protect spawning and rearing habitat on Atlantic salmon rivers at five sites.

"Together," Fefer acknowledges, "we have protected and restored key habitat that none of us could have protected by working alone."

Fefer has been extremely effective in accessing federal grants and identifying matching non-federal funds. Thanks to Fefer's vision and leadership, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program has been a driving force behind four large partnership grants funded through the Natural Fish and Wildlife Foundation - the Atlantic Salmon Collaborative, the Maine Habitat Restoration Partnership, the Maine Wildlife Habitat Initiative, and the Gulf of Maine Seabird Island Restoration Project. In addition, Fefer has coordinated partnerships to successfully implement three large grants and one small grant through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, seven National Wetland Conservation Grants, and a variety of other grants funded directly through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Casco Bay National Estuary Program, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. In total, Fefer has leveraged more than \$26 million in habitat protection and restoration funding in coastal Gulf of Maine.

Fefer provides a unique and powerful set of skills that have helped him lead and succeed. He combines his considerable knowledge of conservation biology with a lifetime of experience in coastal Maine, a practical knowledge of funding sources, a commitment to work in partnerships, an understanding of the importance of targeted outreach, and a passion to protect and restore our coastal environment, for fish, for wildlife — and for all of us.

Coalition Protects Kennebec Wetlands

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Two anonymous donors contributed \$100,000 a piece to help purchase and protect the Hammond property, a 125 tract of mixed hardwood forest and tidal wetlands in

the heart of the Lower Kennebec River - Merrymeeting Bay region. Additional funds from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) completed the purchase. The State of Maine now owns the Hammond property and MDIFW will protect and manage the property for its fish and wildlife values in perpetuity. This is the latest conservation success story of the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, a consortium of federal and state agencies, national and statewide conservation groups, local land trusts, and private landowners.

To date, Coalition members have protected over 2,000 acres, focusing on important habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and all nine species of migratory fish found in Maine waters. "The interest of landowners and private citizens, combined with the support of all members of the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, has propelled this program," says Will Brune of TNC. While TNC negotiated this most recent purchase on behalf of MDIFW, all nine members of the Coalition have played key roles in the 13 projects completed so far. "All of these lands, which are owned locally or by the state, have been acquired with federal funds from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, matched with generous contributions from local landowners, private citizens, and Coalition members," explains Ken Elowe, Director of Resource Management for MDIFW.

The expansive tidal marshes of the Lower Kennebec River/Merrymeeting Bay region offer feeding, resting, and wintering grounds for thousands of migratory waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. From upland to wetland, the properties secure vital nesting sites for osprey and bald eagles and feeding habitat for aquatic species such as rare sturgeon and striped bass.

"The natural and scenic values of the lower Kennebec and Merrymeeting Bay are important to a host of people - landowners, duckhunters, birdwaters, kayakers, canoeists, fishermen, and the local business people supported by all the recreational users," says Jack Witham of the Lower Kennebec Regional Land Trust. "As members of the Coalition, we are working to protect this wonderful area before its vital resources are compromised by the increasing development pressures," says Caroline Norden of Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

The acquisition of the Hammond property completes the first phase of the Coalition's North American Wetlands conservation Act grant requirements. The Coalition has already received additional federal funds for the second phase. Federal funds require local matching funds, and Coalition members plan to continue working in concert with willing landowners to acquire key wetland parcels along the Lower Kennebec and its tributaries. Coalition partners expect to expand habitat protection initiatives to Merrymeeting Bay.

"Together," says Stewart Fefer from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Program, "we are accomplishing an ambitious conservation effort, protecting a sizeable corridor of wetland habitat that will support the wetland-dependent fish and wildlife of this region generations to come."

Members of the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition:

Ducks Unlimited

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay

Kennebec Land Trust

Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Maine Dept. Of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Maine State Planning Office - Land for Maine's Future

The Nature Conservancy (Maine Chapter)

Phippsburg Land Trust

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gulf of Maine Program

Wetland Websites

by Dave Cowan and Cole Peters

The number of potentially useful websites out there is truly phenomenal (even for our wet little corner of the web!), so we won't try to list or evaluate all of them in *The Obligate*. Nonetheless, listed below are a few standard reference sites that you may want to bookmark if you haven't already. We also welcome your suggestions, and reviews, of sites you have visited and found either useful or perhaps disappointing. Send to the MAWS editor listed on Page 1.

Environmental Law Institute's Nat'l Wtld Newsletter Index

www.eli.org/bookstore/nwindex.htm

Hydric Soils Information

www.statlab.iastat.edu/soils/hydric

Society of Wetland Scientists

www.sws.org

US Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station

www.wes.army.mil/el/wetlands.html

US Department of Agriculture's Wetland Science Institute

www.pwrc.usgs.gov/wli/

US Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/wetline.html

US Fish and Wildlife National Wetlands Inventory

www.nwi.fws.gov

and last but not least...MAWS

www.mainewetlands.org

Long-Awaited Flora now Available

by Dave Cowan

It has truly been years in the making but at long last *Flora of the Northeast, A Manual of the Vascular Flora of New England and Adjacent New York*, by Dennis W. Magee and the late Harry E. Ahles, was released this past fall. Destined to become a standard for northeastern botanists and naturalists for years to come, this 1,213 page volume includes more than 2,400 range maps and 995 line drawings and was designed to function as both a reference work and a year-round field manual. A particularly attractive feature is the use of vegetative as well as flowering and fruiting characteristics to facilitate identification of specimens outside the flowering season, or on the basis of limited information - circumstances that are often overlooked by more academically-oriented works. Species accounts include information on synonymy, habitats, and range as well as material of interest to the field botanist and naturalist such as wetland indicator status, threatened/endangered listings, wildlife and human food value, and medicinal and poisonous properties.

Work on this flora began back in the 1970s when Ahles, then curator of the University of Massachusetts Herbarium and an instructor in field identification of vascular plants, prepared botanical keys to various plant groups as a teaching aid. After Ahles' untimely passing in 1981, Magee, a vice president of Normandeau Associates, Inc., Environmental Consultants based in Bedford, NH, took on the work of fashioning the keys drafted by his former teacher and mentor into a finished flora. This consisted of testing, amending and fine-tuning the keys, updating nomenclature and species distributions, preparing maps and overseeing the preparation of illustrations, augmenting the keys with descriptions of families and genera, and writing all other sections that are necessary parts of a finished flora. The single hardcover volume sells for \$69.95 and is available from the University of Massachusetts Press, Box 429, Amherst MA 01004.

USFWS Publications Available

by Dave Cowan / Wende Mahaney

A publication entitled *Managing Common Reed (Phragmites australis) in Massachusetts - An Introduction to the Species and Control Techniques* was released by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in December 1998. Authored by Ralph Tiner, this document may be of interest to individuals involved in wetland management or restoration in New England. For a copy of this publication, or for a copy of the USFWS' complete "wetland publications list", write to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Ecological Services (NWI)

300 Westgate Center Drive

Hadley, MA 01035

Maine Wetland Conservation Plan Outlook

by Dave Cowan

The latest conservation plan for Maine wetlands is reportedly creeping its way through the State Planning Office toward final publication, date unknown. A substantially-completed draft was circulated last April and, according to an inside source, few changes are anticipated. Nonetheless, the document appears to be stalled somewhere in the final revision/review or approval process, most likely a victim of staffing limitations and/or more immediate priorities. In the meantime, MAWS members interested in the draft findings and recommendations may be able to obtain a copy of the latest draft from SPO.

MAWS goes on the Internet

by Karen Bolstridge

MAWS is pleased to announce that the new website has been tentatively completed. The site may be visited at www.mainewetlands.org. Please visit the site and let the Executive Committee know of any errors or helpful suggestions.

Maws and the 1999 Fame College Awareness Project

by Don Phillips

MAWS will be participating in the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) "College Awareness Program" this spring at three locations around the State of Maine. The purpose of this program is to introduce young students and their families to the importance of education beyond high school. MAWS will be providing at least two members at each exhibit's "Job Opportunities Booth" to allow students in grades 6, 7, and 8 to interview wetland scientists about how and why we chose our careers.

The first exhibit will be held on May 21 at the University of Southern Maine campus in Gorham. The second will be held on May 25 at the University of Maine campus in Presque Isle, while the third will be held on May 28 at the Augusta Civic Center.

At this time, all three exhibits appear to have enough volunteers from the MAWS ranks, but if you still want to volunteer at any of these locations call Don Phillips at 848-5714.

Vernal Pools of the Northeast: A Symposium Exploring Vernal Pool Science, Conservation, and Education

by Stafford Madison

This two-day symposium will feature ongoing research pertaining to vernal pool habitats and associated fauna; conservation efforts around New England and beyond;

and examples of innovative educational programs. Friday March 31 to Saturday April 1, 2000 at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI. Cost is \$32. For more information, contact Stafford Madison, USEPA, (617) 918-1622, madison.stafford@epa.gov.

*******IMPORTANT MAWS ADDRESS UPDATE*******

All correspondence to MAWS should be sure to include the designation **PMB 103** (Private Mail Box 103). The U. S. Postal Service has informed us that our mail will not be delivered without this designation.

*******IMPORTANT MAWS ADDRESS UPDATE*******

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