

**Cumberland County Public Works Directors' Association Meeting**  
**August 10, 2011**  
**9:00 A.M.**

*Present:* Mike Shaw (Scarborough), Doug Fortier (Windham), Erik Street (Yarmouth), Roger Mosely (Standish)  
*Staff/guests:* Lori Roth (Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency), Elizabeth Trice (Cumberland County), Eben Marsh (GPCOG), Lynne Powers (GPCOG), Alex Abbott (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Fred Dillon (South Portland Water Resources Protection), Matt Craig (Casco Bay Estuary Partnership)

**1. Welcome**

Mike Shaw opened the meeting at 9:10 A.M.

**2. Acceptance of minutes from June 8**

Roger Mosely made a motion to accept the minutes of the June 8, 2011 Public Works Directors' meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Presentation from Road-Stream Crossing Work Group**

Lori Roth, Elizabeth Trice, Alex Abbott, Fred Dillon, and Matt Craig came to the meeting and represented a group that has come together to help stakeholders create road-stream crossings that are flood resilient, low maintenance, cost effective, and allow naturally functioning streams. They are trying to figure out ways to improve crossings, make connections, and bring money into the region. The work group currently has involvement from the Cumberland County Soil and Water District, Cumberland County Executive Office, Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. There are not currently any municipalities involved.

Lori said that flooding is the number one natural hazard in Cumberland County. The Road-Stream Crossing Work Group came together in part due to concerns over regulatory issues surrounding stormwater and water quality, streams changing due to development, increased frequency and intensity of storms, loss of native fish populations, and strained municipal budgets. The hope is to bring all of these challenges together and find ways to help everyone. The group has information on just under 1000 sites of road-stream crossings in the Casco Bay watershed. They have used that information to identify where there are potential barriers to fish passage. The idea is to work cooperatively and look for opportunities to collaborate.

Matt asked what the public works directors see as challenges in terms of addressing and replacing culverts. Doug Fortier replied that money is the biggest challenge, saying that the way that the culvert law that was proposed some time ago had been written would have had a significant negative impact on municipal budgets. Mike said that it comes down to money, being realistic about what can be accomplished, and realizing that there are priorities. If there are streams of significance that can be identified, that would go a long way. Several public works directors expressed interest in seeing data where fish blockages are. Erik Street pointed out that sometimes, when people go out and look at these sites that have been flagged as top priorities for fish passage, it turns out that they aren't a priority.

The point was made that it can be very difficult to meet the thresholds that have to be met in order to qualify for hazard mitigation funds. The road-stream crossing work group is trying to identify other potential funding sources, since the hazard mitigation process is very rigorous and narrow. By incorporating fish passage data, municipalities could be able to get a grant that way.

Elizabeth mentioned things that the group could do, as a voluntary, non-regulatory approach. Some of those items were providing existing data and maps, collecting more data on the habitat to narrow priorities, pool funds regionally for engineering, identifying cost effective technical solutions, assisting with the permitting process, training towns to collect data for FEMA funding, matching road construction sites to fish passage grants, helping to identify funds for improving projects, providing grant writing assistance, or doing pre-construction stream surveys. She asked the public works directors if any of these seemed like they would be particularly helpful.

Several public works directors mentioned grant writing, saying that they are aware of opportunities but that having the time, ability, and expertise to take advantage of them can be challenging. The potential grant writing assistance element was attractive to them. Elizabeth expressed interest in providing assistance, and said that it could be possible to put together a calendar of all of the grants that the group is aware of and try to line them up with town construction cycles. Erik added that the data aspect could be very important, too. If people on the municipal level are aware that there are streams of particular importance and that there are roads that cross them that will need to be rebuilt in three years, then they would have time to get the road-stream crossing group on board and to mobilize. If public works directors know about these sites, they can plan and set aside funds to support projects. Knowing which culverts are having problems would be huge. Doug asked about grant money and whether it seems to be drying up yet, given the state of federal and state budgets. Elizabeth said that ARRA money gave grants a boost, and that grants.gov still has 15,000 new grants coming out every month.

Alex said that starting in 2009-2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Casco Bay Estuary Partnership were collecting data; they fanned out across the watershed and collected data on perennial streams, looking for crossings to survey. They assessed around 1300, which the data is available for. It was relatively basic information, trying to figure out if there were fish passage barriers. He said that town by town maps of sites (featuring severe crossing barriers along with flood hazard sites) can be provided for anyone who is interested. He is working on setting up a statewide database and would like it to be available on the internet. Alex ran through some examples of types of road-stream crossings from across the state. Lori said that fish passage issues wouldn't add any credence to getting hazard mitigation funds, but flooding could become something that supports an environmental grant application.

The group is working on a survey for public works directors to fill out. They come together once a month and can only spend a certain amount of time on it; there's no outside funding, and people are fitting it in because it fits with the mission of their organizations. They need to know, if they were going to all pull in one direction, what would be the most useful or important to public works directors. Mike said that the grant writing and potential for coordinating a bunch of groups on a project are the two that stand out for him. The group's goal is to get buy-in from public works directors and to start to move ahead on some of these crossings. They asked that the directors in attendance talk to other directors about it, letting them know that the group is trying to come up with ways for them to save money and that they should fill out the survey.

Roger said that it could be tremendously helpful to have the field research's data, knowing what is out there and which sites to be watching; it would also be helpful to have a list of the various available assistances from the organizations associated with the group. He felt that if that was included with the survey, people might be more likely to fill it out. Elizabeth said that having a public works director participate in their meetings or at least on their email list would make the

group stronger, and asked if the directors present knew anyone who would be interested. Erik pointed out that if they are looking for feedback, they may need two people: one from a larger community and one from a smaller community. Mike suggested asking, in the survey, for the things that are the biggest barriers other than money. He felt that the answers would likely be time, labor, and administrative savings.

Mike offered to work with the group on a project that he has in the pipeline in Scarborough. It is the crossing site between Philips Brook and Martin Avenue. He has capital improvement funding already allocated. It is an impaired stream with aquatic life in it. He said that the group could stop hypothesizing and could start working with him to see what can be done. There was interest from the road-stream crossing work group members who were present. They will work with Mike and will come back to a meeting in two months to report back on the results of the survey.

After the guests from the road-stream crossing working group left, there was a brief discussion about public works directors' meetings and what to do about the recent low attendance. It was decided that agendas would be planned 3-4 months ahead and then sent out early; an open letter about how times are difficult but a reminder of a value of this sort of meeting was also suggested. Mike felt that in the future, July and August meetings should be skipped, since it's prime vacation time.

#### 4. **Update on bid status**

Eben Marsh handed out a spreadsheet of bid items, regarding what they are and how many entities are participating. 163 member communities participated (with a community counted twice if it participated in two programs). In the last year, the value of items bid and purchased was over \$16 (or was it \$60? check the figure with Eben) million. The bigger items were road paving, fuel oil/gasoline, and road salt. The estimated savings were \$1.6 million (check figure with Eben).

Eben also went through the bid schedule, discussing the items that are bid, the timeframe that was used in the last year, and the status for those that are done and those that are pending. The program added green items such as vehicle idle reduction systems, remanufactured printer cartridges, and boiler maintenance this year. Other new items included gravel and cutting edges; sweeper brooms is another potential new item, though its inclusion is uncertain. This year, Eben spoke to vendors and asked them to look at bid specifications to make sure that they are current. Vendors have been very interested and responsive on bid items themselves, with bidder interest in the program remaining high overall. The level of competition has been very good. For example, the salt bid came down to Eastern and International Salt; Eastern came out as the winning bidder, and the salt bid will be less this year than it was last year.

In future meetings, Eben would like to make sure that the program is really relevant to public works directors' needs, and to discuss how municipalities are participating and why. Most of the big items in the program are related to public works. Eben has found that commodities work better, in this process, than services. The group may need to talk about something like catch basin cleaning, which was a difficult bid this year, before doing it again next year. There will also be a discussion on cases where vendors call around to individual municipalities to offer a lower price than the winning bid. There are a few towns that don't participate but do use the bids, after they come out, to negotiate a lower price for themselves. That will be up for discussion as well, along with this year's policy of non-members paying double.

Eben told the group that Lynne Powers will be leaving GPCOG at the end of the month; the new administrative assistant will be taking over assistance to the public works directors' association in early September.

5. **Round table discussion: MaineDOT paving projects**

This item was skipped.

6. **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

7. **Other business/future meeting topics**

Mary Ann Conroy and Myranda McGowan will be at the next meeting, potentially along with other people, to be a part of a discussion about National Public Works Week. Erik noted that it was hard to get publicity for it this year, so the initiative is beginning early for next year.

8. **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be on September 14, 2011.

9. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 A.M.