

Down East RC&D

February 27, 2014

Minus a quorum, the secretary's reports are outstanding

The report of the state of the Treasury were reviewed. While funds are flowing into and out of the accounts, Gary's assessment: "We are holding our own."

President's Report – Nate

The National Grange is working on "Getting 10,000 Friends of Rural America"; an effort to focus in rural America initiatives. The National Grange Master had updated his staff on the rural initiatives, including RC&D. At the very least, there is more co-ordination.

The National Executive Director has moved his office to California to cut office space expenses in DC – the funds can now be used to flights back and forth to DC when the need arises. Andy Gordon, the National Executive Director worked on the just-passed Farm Bill, on which Gary did a little as well. Senator Susan Collins did not support the passage as there were things in the bill that were of no help to rural America, but she knew the votes were there to pass it and what it means for local councils. RC&D is not named as a repealed program, hence permanent authorization is in the new language in the Act. The new Farm Bill has some money coming with it that will need to be committed within two weeks – 60% of the total funds are coming to Washington County. Big blueberry companies do not qualify; the East Machias watershed has some. Municipalities do not qualify either as there are other funding sources out there. There were 375 Councils when the change were made, and some Councils are not paying dues to the National Council and are working on their own. All are in survival mode. As a strength – we are providing service to our customers and trying to be self-sustaining.

It is hard to follow a piece of legislation – nationally or in Maine. The RC&D Districts get \$3000 before July 2 – while the original request was \$50,000 per district. The money is not spent until it has been received. The amount of the base grant is \$17,500. An additional \$20,000 will become available July 1, but with that will come more work to do.

Comments were received regarding the work Down East Correctional Facility performs for communities in Washington County. All at the table agreed that the story needs to be told to the politicians, who sometimes only see the big picture.

Geolab – Five Councils have committed to participation. Down East RC&D is committed (\$5,000) until we un-commit ourselves. This is a way for non-profits to harness resources online. An organization could pay a fee and have accesses to services – design a project and access financial resources – with another fee if the project went world-wide. There has been no request for the funds yet, three of five Maine Councils have indicated interest.

Project updates:

Downeast Rails Coalition – DCC's Rich Bard and been in contact regarding the St. Regis pasture and other properties along the Whitneyville/Machias Rivers. A new trails map is in the works with funds coming from, among others, the Roosevelt International Park.

Summer CSO – apparently still in its infancy. Concern there is a lack of communication and/or involvement with local schools. A former Executive Director of SERC has indicated interest.

The Happy Grant – still glad to continue support of the Grand Lake Stream resident.

Destination Cherryfield – changing their date to the first week in October to coincide with Octoberfest in Harrington.

Food Alliance – Sunrise County. This group is mostly producers: they have \$7600 in grant funds excluding dairy. They are hosting a speaker in March.

Sullivan-Sorrento Historical society – painting the outside of the building is the next project. The roof was replaced last year and the new windows were replaced utilizing the help of volunteers. They are looking to launch an Adopt-a-Room Program and receiving assistance from the community.

Cherryfield Academy – recently received \$20,000 from the Davis Foundation. They use local craftsmen for the improvements to the building. Having addressed the Fire Marshall's requirements, they have second floor improvements (and access) and a sprinkler system to go.

Planting salmon eggs – trying to improve the quality of the habitat for the salmon. According to Peter – this is about planting seed, not habitat restoration. It was agreed that such work makes the habitat better for all wildlife; Nate explained the differences the installation of arch culverts has made. There are well over 100 in operation now. There is training coming in April on how to install arch culverts.

Flanders Stream Project – Gary has the powerpoint. There were dollars from NGOs – a \$400,000 project. Nate went on to add that there are some individuals who are interested in specific streams and are will to donate both money and time to stream improvements. He looked at 50 different culverts last year all done by volunteers. Normal culverts showed more damage (washouts). Game cameras documented use by trappers, fisherman and lots of wildlife. The fact that there are more collaborations between fisheries and wildlife biologists, game wardens, and volunteers is a change in the landscape.

Nate also talked about the clam shell efforts to raise the ph in streams and working with DEP. He is sure that no one exists at DEP who does not know the benefits of putting clam shells in a stream to restore water quality. It is proven to work in small streams, which are tributaries. Shells (from Maine shellfish in Ellsworth) must sit for a year before being inserted. Organizations who have assisted: US Fish and Wildlife, Project Share, WA students, UMM students, SWCD, and the Salmon Federation. Nate said using lime on lawns and hayfields would help; DOT uses limestone rock in the ditches on Route 9.

Last, but not least, turkeys are reproducing in greater quantities, probably because they roost in trees and are above foxes and coyotes.

Pizza lunch.