

# York River Overview



## The Water's Journey

The York River begins at the northwest corner of York Pond and quickly flows into the Upper Bartlett Mill Pond in Eliot. It then travels south to southeast through woodlands before entering the Town of York. Here it is met by Cutts Ridge Brook from the south just before passing under Birch Hill Road and coming under tidal influence. The River continues its travels, twisting and turning, in an easterly direction where it converges with Rogers Brook and Smelt Brook. As the River begins to widen, it turns in a more southerly direction where it is crossed by Scotland Bridge Road. At this point, Bass Cove Creek (which leads in from Boulter Pond) and Cider Hill Creek, both from the north, connect to the River. Across from the outlet of Cider Hill Creek, Dolly Gordon Brook and Libby Brook converge and empty into the River from the South. The York River then passes under the Turnpike and Route 1. It curves around Ramshead Point, continuing in a southeasterly direction, where it is crossed by Sewell's Bridge and Route 103. The River passes Bragdon and Harris Islands, turns sharply around Stage Neck and empties into the Gulf of Maine.

## Watershed Facts

- The York River Watershed drains 21,179 acres or 33 square miles.
- It is listed as a Priority Coastal Watershed by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.
- It includes parts of Eliot, Kittery and South Berwick with 72% in York.
- The watershed's elevation rises from sea level to 660 feet.
- Major tributaries feeding into the York River are Cider Hill Creek, Cutts Ridge Brook, Rogers Brook and Smelt Brook.
- York's population increased from 9,818 in 1990 to 12,854 in 2000. This 30.9% increase was the largest in York County.
- Belle Marsh, Folly, Middle, and Boulter Ponds supply water to the Kittery Water District.
- There are 109 miles of streams and rivers in the watershed or 218 miles of river and stream shoreland.

## Watershed Priorities

- Consider the impacts on water quality in land conservation, planning, and development activities in each community. Are current standards and zoning enough?
- Coordinate conservation and access for the entire watershed including the communities of Eliot, Kittery, and South Berwick as well as York.
- Expand the existing connections between the communities and the River, stressing history, recreation, and natural resources.
- Reduce pollution sources responsible for restricted shellfish use, high bacterial counts, nutrient overloading, low oxygen, and sedimentation.
- Conserve the rural and forested views of the River from public roads and the River.

## Accomplishments

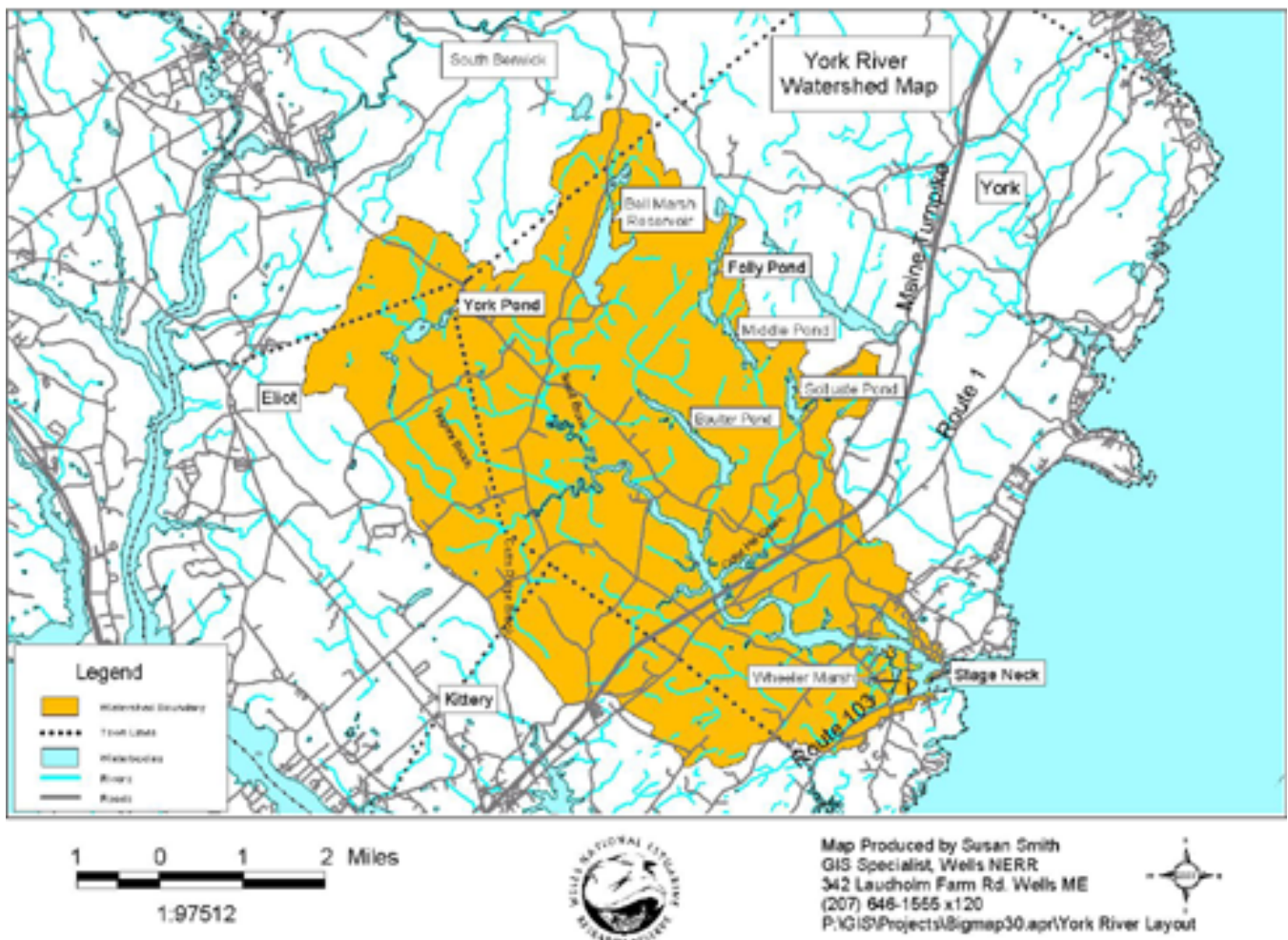
- York's Conservation Commission, Land Trust, and Rivers Association are active in river issues
- Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve has completed a fish distribution and habitat survey (2001)
- National Park Service Rivers and Trails and Radcliffe assessments are completed
- Fish passage and restoration work was done on Rogers Brook in September 2002
- 3,967 acres (19%) have been permanently conserved

## Projects Underway

- A Watershed Survey and Management Plan will be finished in 2003
- A Conservation Plan for the York River/ Brave Boat Harbor/ Gerrish Island
- Mountain to the Sea Conservation Initiative coordinating conservation acquisitions for the York River, Brave Boat Harbor and Gerrish Island to Mt A.
- Restoration work in Wheeler Marsh
- Ecological history of the York River

## Ideas For the Future

- Implement restoration/ remediation projects in the Watershed Management Plan
- Tripling the protected lands along the tidal portion of the River
- Complete an updated vegetation / landcover map for the watershed
- Study impact of Shoreland Zoning, is it working to protect the River?



## Watershed Conservation Strategy Reports

This handout was taken from the York River Watershed Conservation Strategy report, one of seven written for Southern Maine watersheds, produced by the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve in April 2003. The seven watersheds of which a report was written for (from South to North) are Spruce Creek; York River; Cape Neddick River; Ogunquit River; Webhannet River; Merriland River, Branch Brook, and Little River (MBLR); and Nonesuch River. These reports contain information on water quality, land and water use patterns, critical resources, and conservation strategies for each individual watershed listed. The reports also give a list of resources and contacts within the watershed as well as a variety of maps of the watershed.

The purpose of these documents are to provide citizens, land trusts, conservation commissions, and watershed coalitions with a compilation of existing information centered on their watershed. It is a goal that this information will be used to maintain and improve river health and water quality along with the economic, recreational, and community benefits that they provide.

For more information on these reports, please contact the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve at (207) 646-1555. A copy of these reports may also be found at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve Library located at 342 Laudholm Farm Road in Wells, Maine.

