



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect, and improve the unique ecosystems of the Bay through:

Education

Conservation & Stewardship

Research & Advocacy

Member Events

Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and gifts.

Merrymeeting News is published seasonally and is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay.

For more information, contact:

Dup Crosson
Coordinator/Organizer
207-666-1118
fomb@comcast.net



HERITAGE OF THE BAY



In what will be a reoccurring column in our future newsletters, **Heritage of the Bay** will highlight historic aspects of the Merrymeeting Bay region with stories, artifacts, and photography.

This photo, dating from the late 1800s or early 1900s, was taken near the home of Captain Thomas Read, from what is now the Bay Road in Bowdoinham. It shows the mouth of the Cathance River with Read's and Centers Point in the back ground.

From Alma Read's Century Box Writing (1932):

"On the next farm lived Mr. John Hall and his family in a large square white house commanding a wonderful view of the Cathance River and Merrymeeting Bay. He had one daughter, Mary, who became a teacher of excellent standing.

These four families kept their road open during the winter, joining horse and ox teams, to keep the road open to the main road although they were often helped by the good neighbors who lived farther along the main highway. One soon reached the home; was it built by a retired sea captain? of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Read, and living with them was their son Mr. James Read, his wife and two daughters, their neighbors were Mr. & Mrs. Frank Riggs and Mr. George Sampson, his sister Ann and two nephews Herbert and Horace Sampson."

The current owners confirm a small stone tunnel that goes from the old foundation of Read's house down to the Bay, used possibly for smuggling! And thanks to regional conservation work, they said the view hasn't changed at all.

Courtesy of Betsy Steen and the Bowdoinham Historical Society, with thanks to Lara Pertel-Ashouwak.

2013 FOMB ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Media

Print: (Over 10 articles – US & Canada) Outings, Speaker Series, Lawsuits: Atlantic salmon – ESA, St. Croix alewives
Radio: 2x (Atlantic salmon)

Volunteers

Approximately 2,800 volunteer hours
124 volunteers

Membership

340 households (20 new members)
Speaker Series (298 people)
Outside 2013 (170 people)
Newsletters (3)

Outreach Presentations

Maine Maritime Museum Cruises & Paddles (100 people)
Augusta Nature Club (35 people)

Research

Assisted MHPC with Ft. Richmond Archaeo Dig
Assisted MDIF&W with bald eagle surveys
Water Quality Monitoring (26 sites)

Grants

\$15,000: Staffing (Frick Foundation)

Education

Two Bay Days (357 students from 7 schools)
School Visits (42 visits, 726 students, 24 teachers, 7 schools)
Non-School (214 people)
The DaVinci Summer Camp (45 students)
Lisbon Library (35 people)
Bowdoinham Library (25 people)
Merrymeeting Arts Center Preschool (4 students)
Website updates

Conservation and Stewardship

Dresden Falls/Houdlette Conservation Project-easement in progress
Continuous Landowner Outreach
Ongoing Stewardship Activities

Advocacy (postings, letters, testimony, etc)

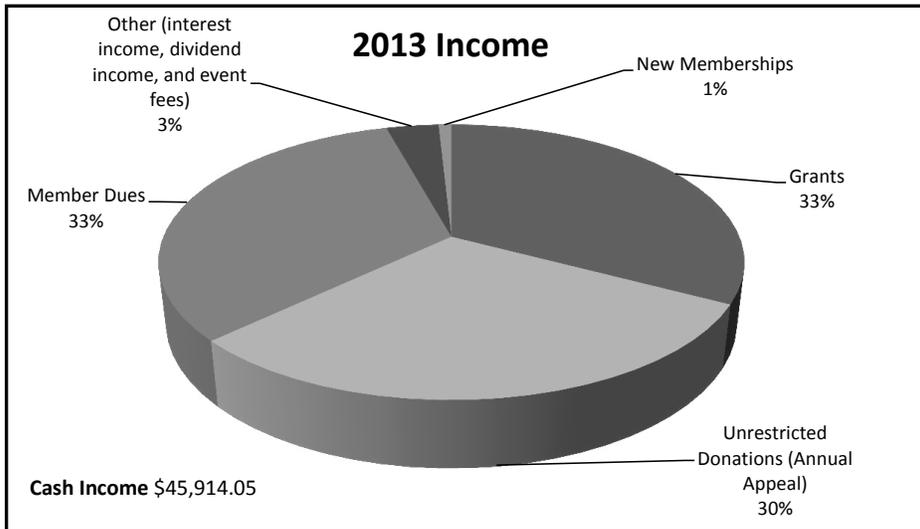
Lawsuit – Atlantic salmon ESA listing & CWA
Lawsuit – St. Croix Alewives
Healthy Rivers/Healthy Gulf promoting safe fish passage
Androscoggin Reclassification Bill
Smart Meters
Tar Sands Pipeline
DEP Mining Regulations

PRIMARY PARTNERS

Friends of Casco Bay
Penobscot Bay Watch
Forest Ecology Network
National Environmental Law Center
Earthjustice
Friends of Kennebec Salmon
Maine Coalition to Stop Smart Meters
Bowdoin College Environmental Studies
Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Endangered Species Coalition
Androscoggin River Alliance
Maine Maritime Museum

Department of Marine Resources
Bowdoinham Public Library
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Maine Land Trust Network
Department of Environmental Protection
Patagonia Outlet, Freeport
Chops Point School
Environment Maine
Town of Bowdoinham
Brunswick TV 3
Merrymeeting Arts Center

TREASURER'S REPORT by Nate Gray

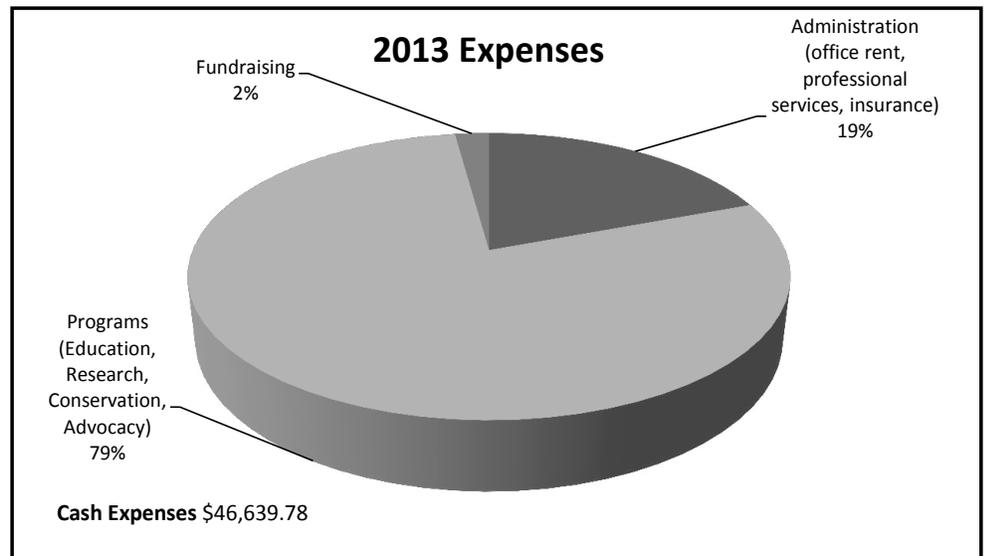


2013 was a relatively quiet year for the FOMB books. With no major project like the Houdlette Conservation piece, bookkeeping was routine. Vance Stephenson, the previous treasurer, was called on a few times to help with some minor issues. His guidance on the books he designed was and is much appreciated. As treasurer I have become more comfortable with the bookkeeping over time and the task is not nearly as formidable as it was in 2012.

2013 was dominated financially by both interim and new hire Coordinator/Organizer payroll. With no staff in 2013, help was obtained from Kathleen McGee to keep the internal clock of FOMB ticking. Once we had hired new staff, the training began and this 'doubling' of payroll was by far the largest expense on the FOMB books. It was worth every penny.

Complementing bank cash, FOMB had an additional \$59K of liquid assets on account with Wells Fargo: equities in Calvert Social Investment vehicles with a year-end market value of \$43K and \$16K in money market funds. FOMB remains a 'passive' investor (i.e., all equity positions resulted from in-kind stock donations). Combined with cash in the bank, FOMB's total pool of liquid funds at year-end was \$255,200.99.

As always, FOMB maintained focus on projects directly benefiting the Bay and limited our outlays for fundraising. Members continue to get a big bang for the buck supporting us. The Membership & Fundraising bucket (which includes postage for the annual appeal) represented just 3% of overall spending.



UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Our annual **Water Quality Monitoring** program needs help for our 2014 season! Training is on March 22nd in Brunswick and we ask volunteers to commit to one Sunday per month from April-October. No experience necessary. We are also looking for someone to help with volunteer coordination.
- Join your neighbors for a multi-site **Cleanup on the Bay** on May 18th from 9:00am to 12:30pm. Sites TBD.
- Spring **Bay Day** is scheduled for May 20th at Chop Point School and we need all hands on deck for one of our most popular community events. Chaperones and guides are needed, as well as help with preparation and anyone wanting to capture the event in photography, writing, or video.

MORE THAN BAY DAY by Kathleen McGee

"Wow!" "Cool!" "PLEASE come to OUR class!"

These are some of the excited comments we hear when Friends of Merrymeeting Bay enters a school to do our environmental outreach classes. Hard to say who has more fun – me, or the kids and teachers.

I paraphrase Gandhi when I say, if you want to change the world, teach the children. FOMB started teaching children about environmental issues 20 years ago. Throughout the school year we offer classes in Bay area schoolrooms as well as outside at our two Bay Days each year.

Many folks are well acquainted with our Bay Days, but FOMB also goes into Bay area schools (K-5), usually with critters in tow and never disappointing! We interact with over 725 kids every year, covering topics from food webs, ecology of the Bay, adaptation, and maps, to informational classes on any of the critters we own. FOMB's substantial investment in taxidermy provides the community with over 25 critters and climbing!

Last month we went to a third grade class with an Atlantic sturgeon, Great Horned owl and skunk (teacher's choice). Here's some of what the enthusiastic kids had to say:



"Thank you for coming to our school.... We learned the great horned owl hunts skunks. ... that Atlantic sturgeon lays a lot of eggs. It was cool when we all got to touch real owl feathers and bones. We also all liked the picture of the huge Atlantic sturgeon. We thought it was fascinating the skunk could spray 10 to 15 feet. It only can use 5 or 6 sprays before it runs out and has to wait 10 days until it gets more unique spray."

FOMB provides this deeply important service to children, and adults, of all ages; connecting to our sense of place and how we all fit into our natural world. Why does this Bay matter? How is it globally unique? How do we interact with the animals and the environment? How do the animals adapt to their environments? How do we act as positive stewards for this unique place? Why do sturgeons jump? Where do eels spawn? Can Great Horned owls eat alligators? Why are so many species in the Bay area endangered or threatened? Kids are enthusiastically engaged in these discussions.

As we descend into an ever deeper technological stream, it is FOMB's hope we can throw a lifeline to the reality of how we relate to the natural world. Without those ties we lose touch with our empathy and what makes us human, what makes that around us part of who and what we are.

Besides, it's cool. All the kids say so!

As a long-time volunteer for FOMB's educational outreach program, I find great joy in the interactions I have with all these children. Kids and teachers alike ask great questions, are keen to interact, think through problems and share their joy in the process. And, wow, they know a whole lot more than I did at that age! Kindergartners blow my mind!

We cannot have future stewards, empathetic policy makers, or well-rounded human beings if we do not have the experiences of the natural world around us. It is great fun to do these classes in our schools, but it is also deeply important. I hope you will consider joining us as a volunteer in our outreach efforts. We're happy to train folks who would be interested in expanding the natural world into our Bay area classrooms.

If you don't have the time, please consider an extra donation to help us expand our critter offerings and expand our ability to get into all the Bay schools.

2013 IN REVIEW

Finally, this last year, after many of consternation, the legislative Marine Resources Committee in minutes unanimously passed a bill providing St. Croix alewives unfettered access to the Grand Falls fishway and 98% of their upstream spawning habitat. Several years ago, FOMB redirected this issue away from its languishing status quo with the International Joint Commission, assorted agencies, and NGOs. With the help of Earthjustice, we filed suit against Maine in federal court to reopen the river. While losing that case, the judge gave us pretty explicit direction on how to move forward to the EPA. That we did with subsequent success.

At the beginning of legislative session, FOMB and the Passamaquoddy tribe introduced virtually identical legislation to reopen the river. We deferred to the tribal bill which passed in Committee, and on to passage by both houses, and into effect when the Governor refused to sign it in his allotted time. This is an incredible accomplishment FOMB members should be proud of, and one that contributes heartily to the health of the Gulf of Maine and Merrymeeting Bay watershed.

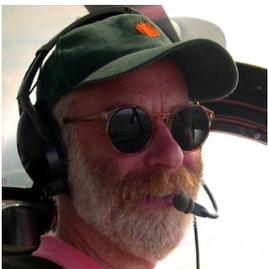
On January 14, retiring federal judge George Singal dismissed our multi-year lawsuit with Environment Maine targeting dam owners on both Androscoggin and Kennebec rivers under the Endangered Species Act for illegal take of Atlantic salmon. Still in play, however, is the Clean Water Act portion of our lawsuit affecting Kennebec dams bound by their water quality certifications to prohibit adult salmon and shad from their impoundments until turbine mortality studies show turbine passage, if desired, is safe.

2013 was a banner year for our education program, featuring two hands-on Bay Days reaching 357 children and 42 in-school visits reaching well over 700 students from 7 schools. In non-school related outreach we educated approximately another 500 people through such groups as the Maine Maritime Museum, Augusta Nature Club and area libraries. Another educational experience for many volunteers was working with Maine Historic Preservation Commission archaeologists as they rushed to maximize excavations at the site of historic Ft. Richmond (two forts, in fact) before construction of the new bridge from Richmond to Dresden began. An FOMB member-supplied backhoe/front end loader helped accomplish much more on the site given the shortage of time.

Our regular water quality monitoring of dissolved oxygen, E. coli bacteria, and pH continued at a multitude of sites around the Bay and its tributaries. And, in a first-ever achievement, our bill to upgrade the lower Androscoggin (introduced at the end of 2012) made it out of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee to the floor of the House early this year where it died under the hammer. Well, it's a start.

Speaker Series and Outside series continue to do well with interesting walks and talks and good attendance.

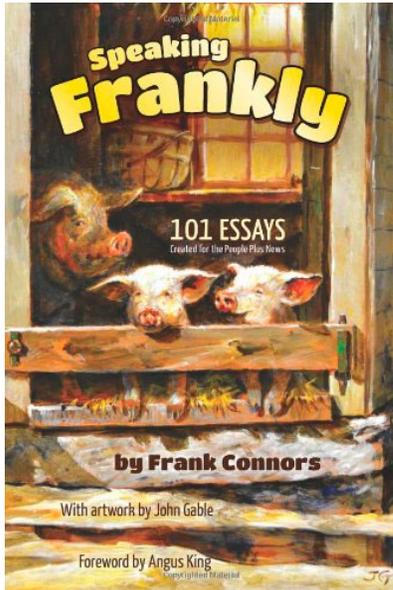
Our accomplishments are not possible without astounding volunteer participation, with 124 active volunteers this year putting in about 2,800 hours. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Working thankfully to coordinate this activity for much of the summer and fall was Acting Director, Kathleen McGee while yours truly was recovering in and out of the hospital from a major accident. In the fall, happily for all, we hired our new Coordinator/Organizer, Topsham native Dup Crosson who is now doing much of this work. Welcome aboard Dup! Thanks as always to a wonderful and supportive Steering Committee and to all for your continued member support.



Respectfully submitted,

Ed Friedman, Chairman

THE SEASON'S FIRST CANADAS by Frank Connors



I heard 'em first. That distinctive, throaty honk penetrating the foggy mist of one of our first pre-spring days. I stopped in my tracks, excited, and turned to face their call head on.

The first “Canadas” of spring are always special; those proud, black heads, banded with that pure white necklace, their massive, yet still grace-filled bodies with tints of black, browns and grays, all undercoated with white as bold as the melting snows.

Their honks fulfill a promise; that first appearance is nothing short of uplifting.

For me, it stirs a great feeling within.

This day there were only two, flying together, one close to the tail of the other, their strong wings working in perfect coordination. There was a casualness in their honk, perhaps a friendly conversation back and forth, I guessed; maybe a mister goose and his lady, chatting about their day.

They flew just over the treetops, not 50 yards from me, but they paid me no mind. If they saw me, there was no start in their motion, no shift in their direction. I could imagine hearing their great wings as they flew so effortless, so directed.

Geese and spring consume some of my earliest memories. As a little kid, I'd walk into great flocks of Canadas, thousands of them, as they fed in the open fields of East Bowdoinham. My brothers and I would just move easy on them; slowly, steadily sliding forward, picking out the guards of each flock, locking our vision on their dark, piercing eyes. We'd move at them until the whole mass lifted off in a great racket, a great flutter, flying easily to the next field or out to the shelter of the Bay. The game was always to walk slowly, to see just how close we could be before they jumped off.

There really were more of them back then.

There was always a spring “camp out” or two, when we'd go with friends and spend the overnight on the shore of Merrymeeting Bay, cooking macaroni and cheese (with hot dogs) on an open fire, but the real occasion was the geese. We'd expect not to sleep; we'd know that the constant din of countless honks all night long would keep us awake. We accepted that; we planned on it. We knew we could sleep after we walked home.

A goose drifting slowly through the water is a beautiful thing.

Imagine this moment. It's early in the morning. The dawn sun is still chasing shadows out of the woods. The only noise around is the honk, honk, honking of a multitude of unseen geese. You can't see them because the water where they float is still covered with a delicate white mist. If you are lucky, you'll catch sight of a head, then two, as they drift toward the shore. You have to be very careful not to move; geese are always very watchful.

If you have been attentive, if you choose not even to breathe, you're rewarded by the sight of a pair, or seven, as they waddle from the gently lapping incoming tide. Here, the drama turns to comedy. Geese when they walk tend to look top-heavy, flat-footed and funny. More than once, my brothers and I have turned entire flocks to the air, just as they strolled from the water. More than once, they'd jump from our sudden laughter.

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT WORK

FOMB Leadership

Our accomplishments are due to the hard work of dedicated volunteers, especially those who serve on our committees. If you want to get involved and serve, please contact the committee chair or Dup Crosson. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)
 Sarah Cowperthwaite, Secretary (Topsham)
 Nate Gray, Treasurer (Freeport)
 Tom Walling (Bowdoinham)
 Boris Clark (Topsham)

Education Committee

Betsy Steen, Co-Chair, 666-3468
 Tom Walling, Co-Chair, 666-5837

Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Monique Lucarelli, Chair, 443-8477

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 865-9377

Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Coordinator/Organizer

Dup Crosson (Brunswick), 666-1118

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond, Maine 04357

Membership Levels

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Sturgeon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Striped Bass | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Smelt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$750 American Eel | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Shad | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Wild Salmon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Alewife | |

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Send information about volunteer opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like a sticker |

\$7 Enclosed (optional) for a copy of *Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Land Owners* [\$5 for book, \$2 for postage].



I hope you've seen the movie about people adopting flocks of geese and encouraging them to migrate, or re-migrate. It is a tender story about dedicated naturalists willing to risk all sorts of hazards, just to put wild things back on a cycle.

The truth is that many geese today do fail to migrate (or choose not to), and over time do lose that ability. If the thousands of geese in Merrymeeting Bay have turned to hundreds, I'm told it's because most of the balance of the flock chooses to stay in the South and lounge on those ever-green golf courses, or median strips along the interstate.

While I can't blame these great birds – these symbols of our spring – for staying put, I do feel poorer for not having those huge flights to show my own kids. But seeing these pairs, and still knowing what they mean, will always be good enough for me.

This is one of 101 essays written by former Bowdoinham resident Frank Connors and reprinted in his new book, Speaking Frankly. To purchase your copy, you only need to call the People Plus Center in Brunswick, 207-729-0757.



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
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Richmond, ME 04357

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FOMB STICKERS NOW AVAILABLE

FOMB members can now proclaim their love of the Bay with our new bumper stickers. We were careful to source a locally made, non-toxic sticker manufacturer to make these so that they align with our overall mission. If you're a member and would like one, contact us or we'll include it with your membership renewal this year. They are 8" x 2.5". They will also be on sale at our events for \$2.00.



FIND US ON FACEBOOK OR TWITTER FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!

For your convenience, our website now features a live calendar with all of our community events. Check it out at www.fomb.org