

Merrymeeting News

40th Anniversary Special, 2015 Vol. XXVI, No.4



The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357 • 207-666-1118 • www.fomb.org

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.

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HAPPY 40TH!

FOMB is celebrating 40 years of extraordinary work! In this special anniversary issue of Merrymeeting News let us walk you through some of the highlights, each of which could really take a full newsletter issue to adequately describe.

It was March 1975 when Cliff Goodall, Ransom and Earle Kelley, Linwood Rideout, Lee Smith, Forrest Skelton, Lloyd Walker, Martha Lentz and Garland Davis incorporated FOMB as the only organization concerned with the Bay as a whole. There was no coordination between towns, or state effort concerned with this important and common resource and our organization was formed to provide residents and landowners a structure to affect decisions about the Bay's future. Of primary interest were land use issues.

The record is thin on our early days and it appears FOMB went dormant after a few years. Fast forward to 1991 and a cyclic state budget crunch threatening Swan Island access and operation when in response, Richmond Town Manager Nancy Churchill and resident Kurt Rauscher realized FOMB still existed as a registered non-profit and could provide a vehicle to help facilitate continued Island operations. They reestablished a Board of Directors or Steering Committee and so began our current run...

FOMB reflects the membership's commitment to land conservation, research, advocacy and education. A holistic, comprehensive and multi-generation approach. This organization boasts volunteer participation over 25% of our membership. Stunning! Both our membership and volunteers are growing.

And as so many entities, profit and non, continue to merge and mega-merger, we see the hope, community and effectiveness of being local and nimble, allowing us to take on issues many other can't or won't, and with necessary speed. FOMB attains success locally, at a statewide and even national level through our passion and ability to leverage, beyond just the Bay, funding, expertise and help through a plethora of organizations and individuals working cooperatively to a common end.

As our 40th year draws to a close we hope you will carry on your support of our mission both with continued membership and volunteer participation as well as a generous gift to our recent annual appeal request. Please enjoy this issue!



Credit: Maine Department of Conservation

LAND CONSERVATION

Land is finite. Humans indiscriminately and arrogantly swallow up habitat as if we are the only sentient beings on earth. In so doing we impose limitations on all forms of life.

Land Protection, one of FOMB's central goals, is time and labor intensive often decades in process and finalization. Land protection is primarily a local task. Without local relationships, knowledge of an area, history and people and expertise on the legalities, protection would be far more difficult and successes far less.

FOMB, a relatively small organization, continues protecting important parcels by creatively leveraging resources to achieve success. We protect, either directly, or working with other entities, a significant amount of extremely important habitat and historical/archeological sites. We are deeply proud of our land protection.

"I want you to know what a pleasure it was working with Friends of Merrymeeting Bay these last five years to protect the Dresden Falls site. Considering all of the land trusts we have partnered with, FOMB has set a new standard, raising the bar of excellence to new heights. We certainly are eager to work with you again in the future and encourage you to contact us if The Conservancy can help protect another site near the Bay."

Andy Stout, Eastern Regional Director, The Archaeological Conservancy

Not only have we protected some of the best archeological sites in the state, FOMB has been instrumental in protecting a significant amount of the best farmland in the State of Maine, right here in the Bay area. It takes conversations, education, relationship building, consistent, persistent communication and a whole lot of hope and determination. FOMB has that.

More central to FOMB's land protection is the Common Sense of it.

Our philosophy is: protecting land makes no sense if the air, water and soil that is part of what creates the land, and habitat, are polluted and abused. Of course the inverse also holds, it makes no sense to protect the water if the land adjacent is unprotected and polluting.

Which informs all our other work: Education, Research and Advocacy.

Conservation & Stewardship Accomplishments

- Total land directly protected: 1,333 acres [including work done with partners]
- Shoreline protected: 11.4 miles
- Easements held: 13 easements: monitored yearly
- Owned land: 90 acres-open to the public for low impact recreation including hunting and fishing
- Choice View Farm and Dresden Falls: saving key archaeology/wildlife/viewshed properties from development
- ME Wetlands Protection Coalition: major conservation successes in the Bay and lower Kennebec
- Leveraged millions in external funds: FOMB provides huge bang for the buck
- Guiding operating procedures: follow Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices
- Outreach: funneling large tracts of land into protection through decades of close relationship and contacts within the Bay area
- Shore Cleanups: over 25,000 pounds of trash collected

RESEARCH

Working with Resource Services in 1997 we conducted a Merrymeeting Bay literature search and developed a guiding plan for filling existing research gaps and future needs. This plan informs our research on the Bay and our subsequent advocacy and education. Science, science, science.

Looking back at our research work for 20 years and recalling the 1000's of hours spent deploying and taking samples of sediment on the Bay, doing core samples, tracking buoy's by air, water, land for current studies, diving and collecting, processing and analyzing mussels for the toxics [dioxin, PCB's, etc.] study, tagging carp, monitoring eagle nests...it is rewarding and striking in its scope.

As in all our focus areas FOMB continues leveraging a phenomenal amount of funding beyond our organization through cooperative partnerships and utilizing exceptional volunteers with high levels of expertise to successfully fulfill the task.

Between research, advocacy [particularly our legal work] and land conservation we work well beyond our annual budget, leveraging millions of dollars, [sometimes in a very short period of time] to reach our goals [legal work on fish passage alone was millions over a 10 year span, protecting the Dresden Falls site, \$600,000].

Most importantly, our research is not merely for research sake. Our intent is to practically apply results to protecting the Bay and the health of species in and around it. For example: current study data supported our outspoken, strong and immediate opposition to a dangerous proposed tidal power project for the Chops consisting of fifty 50 foot wide underwater propeller type turbines. FOMB was the only intervener [besides the applicant's competitor] to call for permit denial. Circulation study information plus our water quality data successfully supported our DEP comments requesting reduced sewage discharges into the tidal Androscoggin [when they realized, via our current study, the discharge flows back and forth in a small area rather than flushing out of the system]; the mussel study led to discovery of two PCB hotspots and a Farmingdale polluter on the Kennebec dumping oil into the river [a Notice of Violation was issued under pressure from us and the site cleaned] and our water quality monitoring helped upgrade the lower Kennebec from Grade C to Grade B [as we are trying to do on the Androscoggin] and more.

FOMB's research is the basis for our advocacy and education outreach, often one in the same.

Research Accomplishments

- Merrymeeting Bay: A Guide to Conservation of this Unique Resource: Digitize [with early optical character recognition software] this important 1975 baseline study of the Bay's natural and socioeconomic resources and put on our web site
- Sediment sampling survey: the first comprehensive sampling of the Bay inclusive of depositional areas.
- Aerial photography/GIS-aquatic vegetation/land use 1956-2010: Multiple aerial surveys and analyses of the Bay and a ½ mile upland buffer
- Current study: first of its kind in the Bay [stimulated calls from other organizations looking for advice on doing it elsewhere], used practically several times to shape policy matters [Chops tidal project, wastewater discharge: Andro, carp study]
- Caged mussel endocrine disruptors/dioxin/PCB's: extensive, comprehensive mussel studies to ascertain legally defensible levels of dioxin and PCB's downstream of pulp mills, survey for and located PCB hotspots in Kennebec, and document endocrine disruption from pulp mill effluent

- Carp tagging/tracking: literature hypothesis of carp as primary source of Bay turbidity [as they have been for other water bodies] with subsequent loss in biological productivity. Anecdotal information about clarity in tributaries before carp were stocked. Fish tracking to determine species behavior leading to possible turbidity solutions
- Bald eagle breeding/nest surveys: ongoing monitoring of eagles and tracking possible effects of toxic exposure through breeding success and contaminant sampling of unhatched eggs
- Water quality monitoring network since 1999: to assure no backsliding from current water quality and to upgrade where rivers are recovering
- Archaeology: more than 10 surveys and digs. Preservation of key sites containing wildlife and or viewshed attributes as well
- Mercury levels in kingfishers [with Biodiversity Research Inc]: determine whether these fish-eating birds can serve as sentinel species for Hg levels in the environment
- Plankton Survey Probe: a baseline probe. No one has any idea of the zoo and phytoplankton communities in Bay.
- Phragmites removal: finding and eliminating invasive species as able. Eliminated only known Bay phragmites stand [on the upper Abbagassett] over several years of dedicated observation and work

ADVOCACY

When issues of critical import arise, FOMB considers how to most effectively utilize our resources to affect change. We determine, through our research and advocacy committee and comprehensive checklist, if and how we can efficiently and successfully impact an issue coming to our attention. Sometimes others can better address the issue. Sometimes we can augment another's work, sometimes no one else is doing the work and we determine we can, and must. Often we are on the cutting edge.

Once the decision is made to engage, we are passionately committed. In looking back at our record over the last 20 years of advocacy work: it is impressive! And we are proud! Further, we continue getting contacted from around the country for advice, support and materials regarding our work, past and present, on a variety of projects [pesticides, sludge, EMF...]. These campaigns are deeply important to the organization, many intense and oft times run consecutively. Our commitment is unwavering.

We believe having information, through research and experience, and not proactively advocating for positive, healthy change, is irresponsible. We take that responsibility very seriously because, as Thoreau said, "who hears the fishes when they cry?" And who will speak for and protect those/that who cannot do so for themselves?



Our legal work over the years has taken us to the Maine Board of Environmental Protection, and state and federal courts on a variety of issues generally to uphold the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts, state water quality standards and other legal standards protecting critical wildlife. Personal contacts and excellent research on our part created partnerships with the Center for Biological Diversity, Earthjustice and the National Environmental Law Center, all at no cost to FOMB.

FOMB's advocacy includes educating the legislature, state agencies, municipalities, Congress, FERC, on critically important issues from toxics to fish passage...and, our children.

Land Conservation

Over 1,300 acres protected through conservation easement & purchase

Annual stewardship for all properties

Partnering to increase protection of important habitat

Member: Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition

Protecting this unique freshwater tidal ecosystem, including migrating waterfowl, bald eagles, plants, and diadromous fish habitat.

Dresden Falls

“I want you to know what a pleasure it was working with Friends of Merrymeeting Bay these last five years to protect the Dresden Falls site. Considering all of the land trusts we have partnered with, FOMB has set a new standard, raising the bar of excellence to new heights. We certainly are eager to work with you again in the future and encourage you to contact us if The Conservancy can help protect another site near the Bay. Please stay in touch.”

Andy Stout, Eastern Regional Director,
The Archaeological Conservancy

125 Acre Bishop Farm Protected

“The former Bishop Farm is contiguous to 340 protected acres to the south of Rt. 24 and about 25 acres to the north, making a total of 490 acres protected, a very significant piece of habitat. That lower field was once blackened with geese in the spring and fall and a game warden estimated their number at 10,000.”

Merrymeeting News

Androscoggin Reclassification

“Decades later, tests conducted for years by Bowdoinham-based Friends of Merrymeeting Bay consistently have shown cleaner river water on the lower Androscoggin.”

Times Record

Wild Salmon

“FOMB and Friends of the Kennebec Salmon (FKS) sent off comments on the initial report and members of the National Research Council made a fact-finding mission to Maine where FOMB and FKS spoke to them and gave them more detailed information. Shortly thereafter we received word the Council and National Academy of Sciences had reversed (corrected) themselves and were now giving our salmon the recognition they deserved.”

Merrymeeting News

Atlantic Salmon ESA/CWA Lawsuits

“Kennebec and Androscoggin salmon on verge of extinction, dam owners & government agencies continue to stall.”

Times Record

Research

3 year Circulation Study of Merrymeeting Bay

Invasive species removal

Caged mussel biomonitoring & locating of toxins

Water Quality Monitoring Program

Archaeology digs, with MHPC

Aerial vegetation and land use studies

Bald eagle breeding surveys with MDIF&W

The Chops Tidal Power Project

“Evidence available shows we were resolute but well-reasoned. We are not “local hostiles” but local advocates, a voice for the few places left natural, not despoiled for the sake of “progress.” Oceana is making excuses for a bad idea gone south. We didn’t bully them out of the area or harass them; we presented facts backed by pertinent research to reflect our position.”

Times Record Op-Ed

St. Croix Alewives

“U.S. agency rules against Maine in fish dispute: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has struck down the state of Maine’s controversial law that blocks gaspereau from the St. Croix River.”

CBC Canada

“Atlantic Salmon ESA & CWA Lawsuits The Atlantic salmon in the Kennebec and Androscoggin are on the verge of extinction, yet the dam owners and government agencies continue to stall.”

Times Record

Advocacy

A Voice for the Bay and our environment





Photo: Doug Watts

Oppose harmful energy projects in critically sensitive areas



Post local advisories for fish consumption

Healthy Rivers/Healthy Gulf:
citizen science & community organizing to restore diadromous fish runs



Legal actions to protect endangered & threatened species

Toxic use reduction, river upgrades & improved water quality

Bay Day

“I don’t want to stop for lunch, I want to stay and become an archaeologist.”

Bay Day Student

“Finally, we started searching for wild carrots. Now most people would say, “That’s boring!” Well, boy, are they wrong. You want to know why? Well I will tell you. We would get down on our knees and actually search the ground for carrots. Once we found carrots we would go to the pond and wash them off so they were not dirty when we ate them. They were really good!

You’re not going to believe what we did next...”

Bay Day Student

“I like that everything is so green. I want it to stay green for people that next come and come after that.”

Bay Day Student: Kashi film on FOMB and community volunteers.

Education

Reaching over 1,400 area students each year



Bay Days
About 400 students attend each year

Archaeology digs, fish printing, watershed modeling, ecology walks, beach seining, & more!



Classroom Visits
Over 1,000 student participants

Critter visits, forestry lessons, fish printing, wetlands ecology, history, and more!



Advocacy Accomplishments

- Pesticides in schools: worked with MTAC, MOFGA to eliminate pesticides from schools and schools grounds. When application is necessary we asked for prior notification to parents and teachers [at least 72 hours].
- Toxic Use Reduction Act: re-authorizing and expanding the seminal law requiring government and industry to reduce and report the use of specific toxins
- Coalition for a Dioxin Free Maine: a first-in-the-nation [and only] law eliminating dioxin from the papermaking process [and thus from discharge into our rivers]
- Posting of statewide fish consumption advisories with Maine Toxics Action Coalition [MTAC]: award winning posting of waters in Maine protecting especially the vulnerable populations from consuming high levels of mercury, dioxin, PCB's
- In Harm's Way: distribution with MTAC of this comprehensive publication on children and toxics to every pediatrician, ob-gyn, neurologist, family practitioner, town health officer in Maine and to libraries in the Bay area
- American eel downstream passage: with Doug Watts, BEP, state court, legislature [legislation vis a vis dam removal and fish passage]
- Atlantic salmon ESA listing USFS/NMFS: with Doug and Tim Watts and MTAC, successfully petitioned federal agencies to list Kennebec, Androscoggin and Penobscot salmon as endangered
- Atlantic salmon ESA/CWA "take" litigation-federal court: with Environment Maine, first ever to sue private dam owners for illegal "take" under the ESA
- Kennebec dredging-federal court: with Phippsburg Shellfish Commission, Phippsburg Land trust and various individuals, litigation to stop BIW/Navy from illegally and unnecessarily dredging the Kennebec to navigate a destroyer out of the Kennebec [when it had done so on sea trials without dredging not long before], threatening ESA and other vulnerable fish species
- Worumbo dam rebuild ESA federal court: with Environment Maine, injunction/suit to stop illegal rebuild of the Worumbo dam, which affected the ESA/CWA case
- St. Croix Grand Falls dam-river herring passage, federal court, EPA, state legislature: with Doug Watts and Kathleen McGee sued State, filed Notice of Intent to Sue EPA to require, then got, alewife passage on the St. Croix for first time since 1995
- Chops Tidal Power Project – DEP, FERC: stopped a foregone-conclusion project at The Chops for a tidal power project which would have impacted every species navigating through The Chops [effecting habitat throughout the watershed]
- Smart meter/global space-based wi-fi threats: GUARDS [Global Union Against Radiation Deployment from Space], ME Coalition to Stop Smart Meters: FOMB the only environmental organization in Maine taking on the growing toxic issue of EMF exposure to wildlife and humans and the coming "electronic silent spring."
- Maine Power Reliability Project: intervener [350 miles new high voltage lines couched as "reliability"]
- Lower Kennebec water classification upgrade: the state/DEP used our data to upgrade the Kennebec from Augusta to the Chops, the best continuous data available, via our water quality monitors
- Repeated lower Androscoggin upgrade attempts: years of water quality data showing that stretch of river has already achieved Grade B status in spite of industry squashing it at the legislature. We soldier on.
- Testimony over the years: from Alewives to Zoning and everything in between to help Maine's environment



EDUCATION

In order to affect long-term change we need to educate the citizenry in general and our children in particular about the Who, What, When, Where and Why of [our] environmental concerns. This choice is largely informed by significant FOMB research and advocacy.

“We must begin with the children”. Mahatma Gandhi

Over the years we created a much-emulated program for elementary schools in every town around the Bay and beyond. Our education program also includes getting [mostly] 4th grade students from around the Bay outside, away from florescent lights and computers and outside for a day of mud, fun and ecological study. The schools love it; we love doing it. None of this could be accomplished without the multitude of devoted volunteers believing in our mission. Volunteers make our successful, popular education outreach possible.

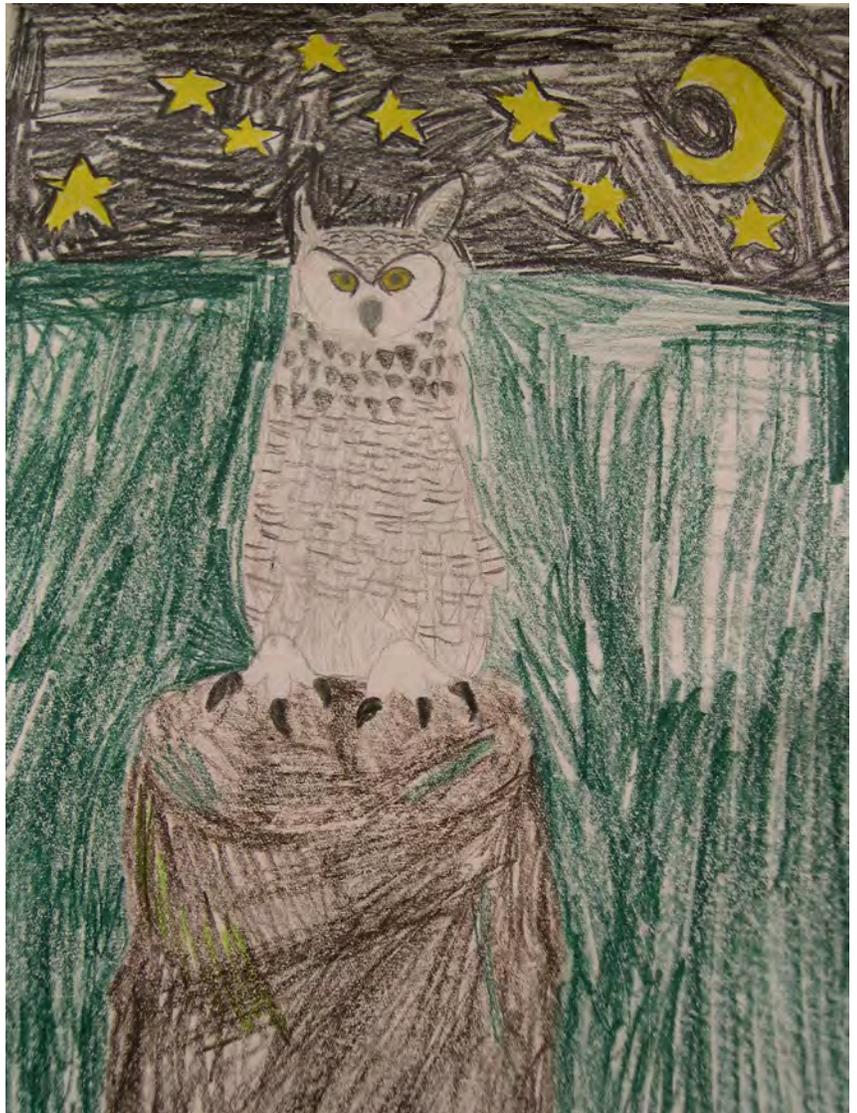
Our education extends to a year-round speaker and outdoor series, also now emulated, catering to adults and families. For just shy of two decades our programs have reached thousands of people.

Education Accomplishments

- Winter Speaker Series: 19 years, 152 speaker presentations
- Bay Days: 16 years, approximately 30 Bay Days reaching 125-400 students per event
- In school visits: 12 years featuring taxidermy critters. 20-70 class visits/year.
- Website: with outstanding electronic resource library [Cybrary]. Created and administered by volunteers
- Curriculum: developed curriculum and guide for elementary schools
- Media: televise speaker events on community cable
- Conferences: asked to speak on toxics, water use [ie: water extraction], environmental priorities in Maine, fish consumption advisory issues, dioxin, etc.
- Presentations: Bowdoin College, Senior College, Maine Maritime Museum Cruises, community cable TV, libraries, etc.
- Summer Outings: June through September, by land and sea!

“Bay Day is great because it gets them dirty, it gets them muddy, they’re having fun, they’re learning in many different ways.”

Kashi film



Artwork from in-school “critter” visit.

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 Kathleen McGee. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)
Nate Gray, Treasurer (Freeport)
Tom Walling, Secretary (Bowdoinham)
Steve Musica (Richmond)

Education Committee

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

Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Chair Vacancy

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 446-8870

Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Coordinator/Organizer

Kathleen McGee, 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 _____

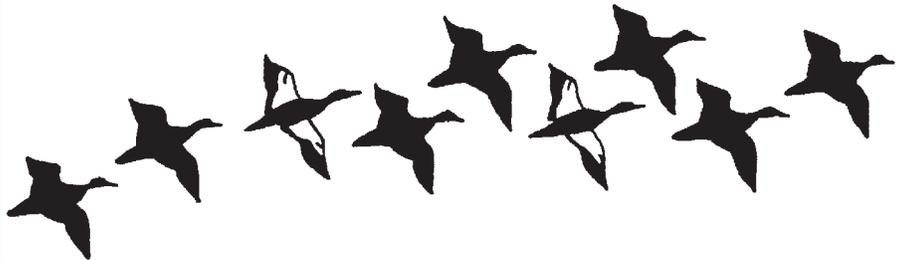
Town/State/Zip _____

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].



Thanks to Will Zell and Zellous.org for newsletter layout.



“Protecting this property was a long-term goal for FOMB and a major accomplishment. The Archaeological Conservancy, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Land for Maine’s Future and individual donors and grantors all worked together with FOMB to make this possible.”

Times Record



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
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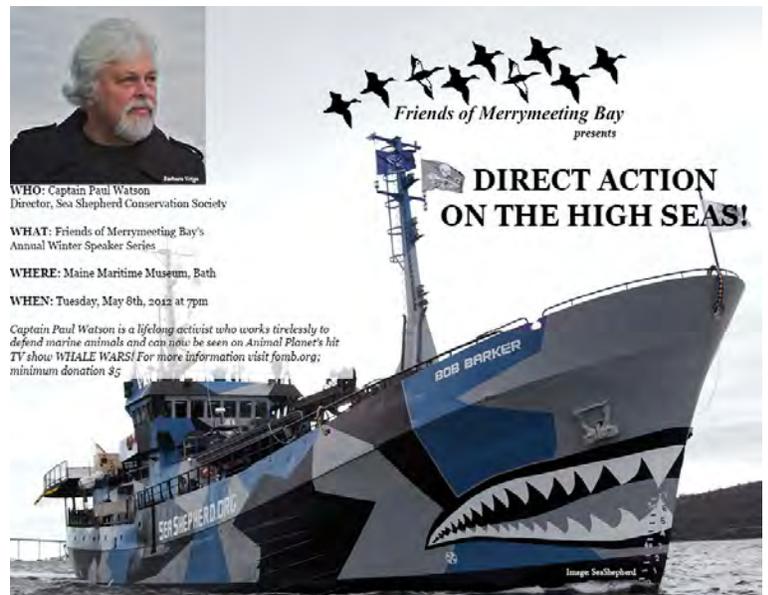
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"First of all, I would like to extend our thanks to the members of the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay for not only the work they do to protect this rare and precious ecosystem in our backyard, but also for putting on this day, and even covering the cost of the bus transportation (not to mention the free towing service out of the mud!) Dave Whittlesey was our chaperone for the day and he mixed history, culture, and facts with humor in escorting us from activity to activity."

Greg Emerson, teacher, Woolwich Central School



19 years of FOMB Winter Speakers Series: Of Cows and Courage!