

Area covered: **HANCOCK COUNTY, MAINE**

Title of Forum: ***It's our Watershed Too! Youth Forum***

Convener: Dr. Jane Disney, Director
Mt. Desert Island Water Quality Coalition
P.O. Box 911, Mt. Desert, ME 04660
207-288-2598

Date of Forum: November 7, 2002

Place: Blue Hill, Maine

- *Number of Attendees:* 48 students plus teachers and other adults. There also were Environmental Education students from College of the Atlantic that helped facilitate the groups and helped lead the various events. Invitations were mailed and emailed to all schools from grades 4-12 in Hancock County.
- *Media coverage – public education:* Local and regional print and television coverage before and at the event. Good MDIWQC newsletter and website information about forum.
- *Was there good exchange of information from the students to scientists and from scientists to students?* The student groups had been invited months in advance, given the set of GPAC forum questions, and classes and individuals had done projects concerning the land-marine connections and threats. The students had ample time during the forum to display their projects for all attendees. There was an opening ceremony led by a Penobscot Nation leader, several watershed awareness activities that taught how to do land use planning and water quality analysis and riparian planting.
- *As a result of forum, do more students understand the concept of the Gulf of Maine watershed than before?* Yes.
- *As a result of forum, do more public and land-based managers understand concept of the "water cycle" than before?* Yes particularly due to some of the hands-on activities during the forum.
- *How was the matrix completed?* The students held Round Table Discussions of the Issues and the whole group held a Clean Water Congress at the end. Although the matrix was not completed, the issues defined were the same.
- *Any follow-on activities?* There was second Youth Forum on May 20, 2004.

Key Priority Issues Identified by students for Hancock County, Maine (in 7 roundtable discussions of 7-8 students each from grades 4-12)

1. **Runoff** (Non Point Source Pollution) -- 5 of 7 groups commented on runoff as a priority issue. The other two groups listed runoff but did not prioritize this issue. Runoff sources they mentioned included: parking lots; urban runoff; fertilizers used on vegetable, tree and blueberry farms; nutrients from cattle and salmon farms; pesticides; and fecal coliform
2. **Boaters** -- 5 of 7 groups identified "boaters" as a priority issue affecting water quality due to: overboard discharge and sewage, throwing leftover bait and trash into waters,
3. **Litter** -- 2 of 7 groups identified trash as a priority (5 other groups that cited trash from boats).
4. **Erosion or Siltation** -- This was a priority issue for 2 groups.
5. **Clearing land for development / Deprivation of vegetative buffers** – Students presented vegetative buffer loss as a key issue in their watershed.
6. **Lack of Awareness (globally and locally)** – This was a priority issue for five students in one group.
7. **Trawling** -- Students in one group listed disruption of the ocean floor as an issue affecting their watershed.
8. **Drought/Weather** – 7 students in one group identified current drought as biggest issue -heavy usage of aquifers. One group cited weather as an issue - effects on watershed of weather events "Hurricanes/tornadoes/global warming/ozone depletion."
9. **Drinking water** – Issue for one group.
10. **Dumps/Jukyards** – Issue for one group as leaching oil and other contaminants.
11. **Mills and Industrial waste** – Priority issue for one group
12. **SUVs** – "Gas and destroying habitat were viewed as an issue in the watershed."
13. **Acid Rain** – Mentioned by 2 groups, prioritized by 1 that had noticed lower Ph in their water sampling.
14. **Invasive Species** - Discussed by 4 of 7 groups but not prioritized by any. Included milfoil from boats from out of area.