

DRA and PWA Explore Opportunities for Collaboration: A Joint Statement to Our Members

Our volunteers, members, and supporters are the true caretakers of the lands and waters of the Damariscotta River and Pemaquid River watersheds. You help to educate tomorrow's river keepers. You make it possible to conserve treasured forests, farms, and islands. You enable the creation and maintenance of dozens of miles of trails and you play a vital role in keeping our waterways clean and healthy. Thank you!

We are so grateful for all you do for the well-being of our local lands, waters, and communities and know you share in our deep connection to our special corners of Maine. That is why we want you to be among the first to know about an exciting development for our two organizations and for the places you care most about.

About two weeks ago, Damariscotta River Association (DRA) and Pemaquid Watershed Association (PWA) began a three-month exploration of areas for potential collaboration, common ventures, and structures to enhance the missions of both organizations.

Guided by a thoughtful Memorandum of Understanding, we'll not only review programs, documents, budgets, and policies, but we'll also discuss our goals and dreams for the Pemaquid Peninsula and Damariscotta River region.

In what areas can we do more and go farther together? From joint regional conservation projects to shared staff or co-location – possibly even unification – all options are on the table, but no endpoint is pre-determined.

Collaboration is nothing new for DRA and PWA. For decades, we have worked together for the common benefit of the two rivers for which we are named, and for the well-being of our communities. One good example of where our organizations came together is the Crooked Farm Preserve in Bristol which DRA and PWA conserved over a decade ago, and which we continue to manage in partnership. This year, we are jointly fundraising to purchase a 70-acre parcel right on the Pemaquid River. It is part of a larger trail and wildlife corridor crossing the Damariscotta River and Pemaquid River watersheds.

The official team engaged in almost weekly discussions over the coming three months will include DRA Board President Joel Russ, PWA Board President Sandi Day, DRA Executive Director Steven Hufnagel, DRA Board Secretary Carolyn McKeon, and PWA Board Members Michael Kane, Jim Hatch, and Peter Lawrence.

Team members agree that we're off to a great start. Past successes together have built a real sense of trust. We all see the potential to move forward in a way that strengthens our programs and furthers our missions, while maintaining the volunteer-driven and community-based approach we both bring to our work.

As our discussions proceed, we hope you'll feel free to contact any of us to share your ideas, hopes, and concerns. We in turn will keep you informed of our progress and direction.

No final decisions about the form of our future collaboration will be made without member input. Specifically, in addition to individual conversations which are always welcome, we will hold formal gatherings where members and volunteers can ask questions and offer feedback in a group setting.

We look forward to hearing from you and you can be assured of hearing more from us!