

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Meduxnekeag River

WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The Meduxnekeag River watershed, located in northern Maine, is home to the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians. This heavily forested watershed has 67 miles of rivers and 290 miles of streams. Of the 289 square mile watershed, 800 acres is tribal land. The Maliseet Indians are river people who traditionally fish, trap, hunt, and gather within the waters, floodplains, and riparian areas of the St. John River. The Meduxnekeag, a tributary of the St. John, is a critical link to preserving their tribal practices, traditions, and history. After purchasing its land in 1988, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians began to address their water quality problems.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Targeted Watersheds Grant will focus on the following environmental problems:

- Soil erosion problems stemming from agricultural crop lands (potato and grain) and livestock operations.
- Specific instream impairments, such as elevated water temperatures, low dissolved oxygen levels, increased nutrients, and sediments, that result in loss of fishery habitat, spawning, and nursery areas.
- High levels of *E. coli* bacteria resulting from improper stormwater sewage connections that cause public health concerns.

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

The Maliseets will use EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds to continue efforts derived from their 1993 Watershed Protection Plan. Specifically, they will:

- Institute an innovative “Minimum Open Ground” concept utilizing a combination of winter cover crops and mulching practices. Six area farmers with approximately 2000 acres have been recruited.
- Perform a camera survey of the area’s storm drain system to locate storm drain connections. All improper connections will be removed.

“I can definitely see the many benefits in the small grain application of a winter crop. Preventing soil loss and increased soil health will both be beneficial to our operation.”

— Albert Fitzpatrick
cooperating farmer



A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

In 1991 the Houlton Band of Maliseets formed its first partnership with the Southern Aroostook Soil and Conservation District. Since then, other partners and stakeholders have joined the effort, including:

- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service
- University of Maine
- Town of Houlton
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- Meduxnekeag Watershed Coalition
- Organization for Watershed Living



Farmers learn about the project at an educational forum.



Winter cover crops help prevent soil loss.



Soil erosion harms the fish and turns the Meduxnekeag River an unsightly brown.

Meduxnekeag River



EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHEDS GRANT PROGRAM

EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant Program is a new, competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For more information about the selected watersheds, please visit:
<http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>



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