

Spruce Creek Overview



The Water's Journey

Spruce Creek begins in Eliot, just a short distance west of the Eliot/Kittery town line where three small unnamed brooks converge. The Creek then shortly enters Kittery and comes under tidal influence. It quickly widens after passing under the Turnpike and Route 1 bridges flowing through the geographic center of Kittery for 2 miles to its outlet in the Piscataqua River, which then quickly enters the Gulf of Maine. Six small fresh water streams feed the estuary portion of the Creek from the surrounding uplands; Wilson Creek, Fuller Brook, Hill Creek, Hutchins Creek, Crocker's Brook, and Barters Creek. The watershed divide with the York River and Brave Boat Harbor follows the height of land southwest of Cutts Ridge, and runs in a southeasterly direction near Lewis Road. The divide continues southeasterly to the Bartlett Road/Shaydon Lane area, where the divide takes a more southerly course, intersecting with the Piscataqua River watershed divide at the height of land north of Chauncey Creek.

Watershed Facts

- The watershed drains 52% of Kittery (9.6 of 18.5 square miles)
- 90% (5,498 acres) of the watershed is located in Kittery with the remaining 10% (611 acres) in Eliot
- From 1990 to 2000, York County population growth rate was 13.5%, the highest growth rate in the state of Maine (more than 4 times the state's overall growth rate which was 3.8%).
- Types of freshwater wetlands found in Kittery include Palustrine Emergent, Palustrine Forested, Palustrine Scrub Shrub, and Palustrine Vernal Pools
- As of April 1st 1998, local assessed value of Kittery was \$659,049,500
- The entrance of Spruce Creek to the Piscataqua River is adjacent to and downstream from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard superfund sites.

Watershed Priorities

- Increase the amount of conservation land and public access.
- Minimize negative impacts of land conversion from rural to more developed uses.
- Reduce threats to water quality from existing septic systems and non-point source pollution from residential roads, fields, and lawns.
- Eliminate restrictions to tidal flow and flushing at the Route 1 road crossing.
- Document the extent and threat of contamination of Spruce Creek from the Portsmouth Navy Yard superfund site.
- Control non-point pollution from stormwater runoff along Route 1 corridor.

Accomplishments

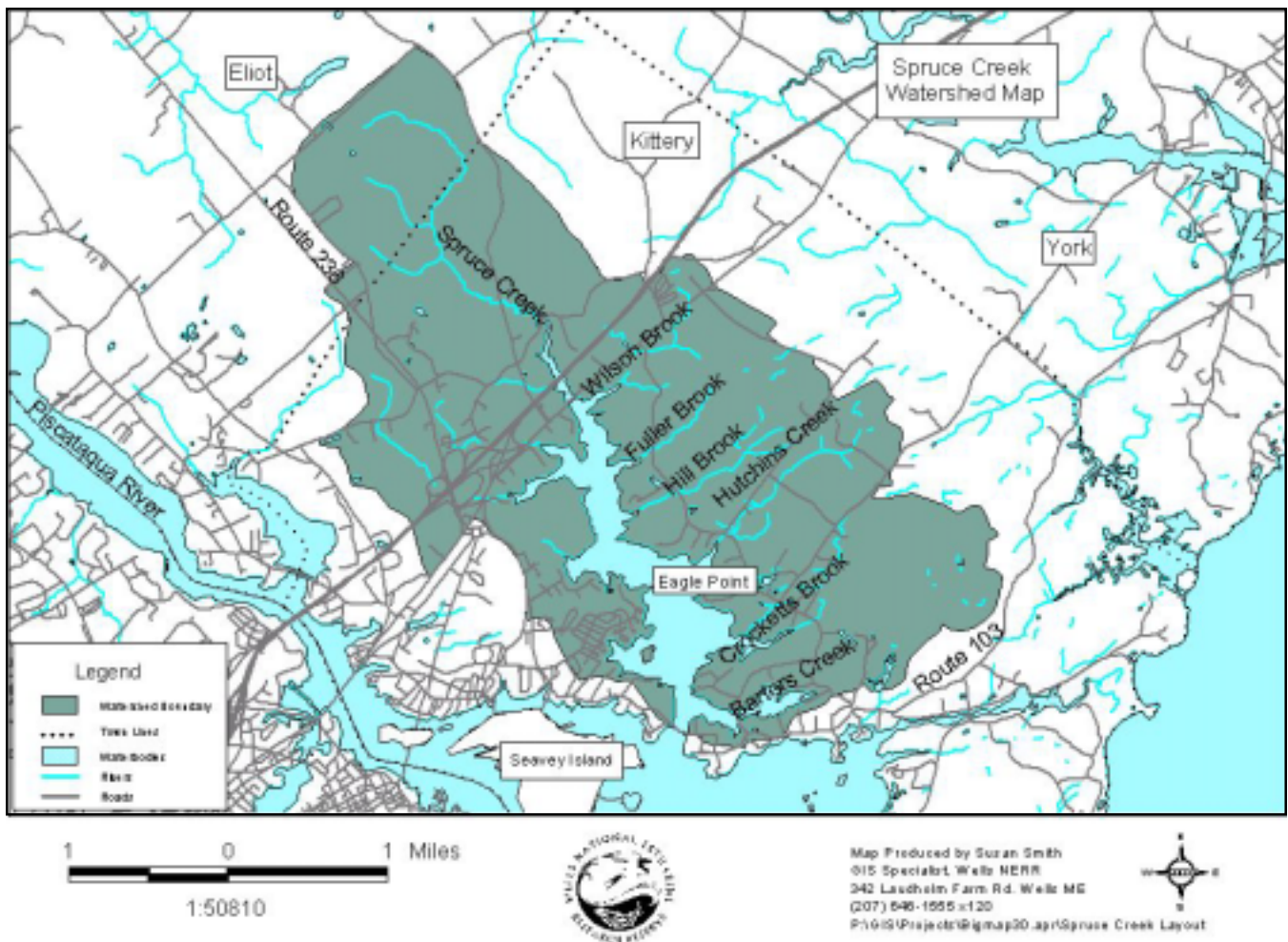
- Kittery Land Trust and Kittery Conservation Commission are active in watershed issues
- Rogers Park and Eagle Point have been protected and are open to the public
- Reduction of active overboard sewer discharge permits to two sites

Projects Underway

- Water quality monitoring by Kittery Conservation Commission and the Maine Department of Marine Resources
- Annual cleanups sponsored by the Kittery Conservation Commission
- Contamination studies at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

Ideas For the Future

- Complete a watershed survey and management plan
- Removal of tidal restriction at Route 1 crossing.
- Study stormwater impacts in Spruce Creek drainage
- Elimination of remaining overboard discharges - particularly the 36 unit permit
- Focused and coordinated effort to conserve lands in watershed



Watershed Conservation Strategy Reports

This handout was taken from the Spruce Creek Watershed Conservation Strategy report, one of seven written for Southern Maine watersheds, produced by the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve in April 2003. The seven watersheds of which a report was written for (from South to North) are Spruce Creek; York River; Cape Neddick River; Ogunquit River; Webhannet River; Merriland River, Branch Brook, and Little River (MBLR); and Nonesuch River. These reports contain information on water quality, land and water use patterns, critical resources, and conservation strategies for each individual watershed listed. The reports also give a list of resources and contacts within the watershed as well as a variety of maps of the watershed.

The purpose of these documents are to provide citizens, land trusts, conservation commissions, and watershed coalitions with a compilation of existing information centered on their watershed. It is a goal that this information will be used to maintain and improve river health and water quality along with the economic, recreational, and community benefits that they provide.

For more information on these reports, please contact the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve at (207) 646-1555. A copy of these reports may also be found at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve Library located at 342 Laudholm Farm Road in Wells, Maine.

