

Residents welcome to join Intervale park planning process

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KENNEBUNK — Where homes once stood and children played — and where as late as two weeks ago flood waters swirled — a park will grow in Kennebunk.

Two of the three Intervale Road properties that were bought out with Federal Emergency Management Agency funds following the flooding of houses during the Patriot's Day storm of 2007 are slated to be turned into a park this year. To that end, the town is hosting a site walk of the 3.1-acre park-to-be at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 20. And organizers are hoping residents — and especially neighbors — come and give their input.

"We're trying to do this through a process that involves citizens," said Kennebunk Town Planner Judy Bernstein. "We're hoping to get the neighborhood to participate early in the plan development process so they can give input and guidance on what they'd like to see and like not to see."

Given its residential setting, said Landis Hudson of Maine Rivers, less is probably more when it comes to the park design.

"I do not foresee any large-scale changes," Hudson said. "It's a beautiful but modest site. We want something that fits in well with the neighborhood and the site."

The site currently has a large grassy area and a small gravel drive and parking area. Trees line the back of the property, where it nestles along the Mousam River. Bernstein said the property does have some wetlands, which will have to be delineated. But given how low the land is, how often it has flooded and FEMA guidelines, no permanent structures will be erected on the site.

"There will be natural paths," she said, along with some kind of dock or ramp that will allow people to put canoes or kayaks into the river. There may be an informational kiosk that educates park visitors on the river as well.

"Maybe a display explaining the ecological aspects of the river," Bernstein said.

The Mousam and Kennebunk River Alliance has also become involved in the planning of the park, said spokesman Alex Mendelsohn.

"This park is specifically a community project," he said. "It will act as a focal point to make people more aware about the Mousam River in general. It will be a nice resource."

The alliance will be working with a number of groups, including Maine Rivers and the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. In addition Yarmouth landscape architect Mitchell Rasor, also Hudson's husband, is donating his design service for the park.

Following the site walk, participants are welcome to meet at Town Hall to discuss the design for the park. That part of the discussion will start at 10:30 a.m. in Room 300.