

10-23-2014

## Habitat Working Group Notes 2014

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/cbep-publications>

---

### Recommended Citation

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. (2014). Habitat Working Group Notes 2014. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. Document Type: None or Conference Proceeding

This Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu](mailto:jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu).



## **Casco Bay Plan Revision - Habitat Working Group Meeting**

**October 23, 2014, 1:00 – 4:00 pm**

**US Fish and Wildlife Service - Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, Fundy Road, Falmouth**

**Attendees:** Robert Stratton (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife); Curtis Bohlen (Casco Bay Estuary Partnership); Karen Wilson (University of Southern Maine); Jed Wright (US Fish and Wildlife Service); Hillary Neckles (US Geological Survey); Slade Moore (Maine Coastal Program); Steve Walker (Maine Coast Heritage Trust); Angie Brewer (Maine Department of Environmental Protection); Jim Stahlnecker (Maine DEP); Shri Verrill (USM student); Landis Hudson (Maine Rivers); Matt Liebman (US Environmental Protection Agency); Jake Riley (Stantec); Kevin Ryan (FB Environmental); Eric Hutchins (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration); Matt Craig (CBEP).

### **Overview/Background**

The meeting served as the fall meeting of the Casco Bay Habitat Restoration Committee meeting, as well as the kickoff meeting of the Habitat working group for the *Casco Bay Plan* revision process. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Identify short-term workplan priorities
- Initiate development of long-term strategic goals for Casco Bay's habitat, as part of the revision of the *Casco Bay Plan*

### **Ongoing efforts**

- Saccarappa Dam
- Royal River dams
- New Meadows Lake – no advances on discussions about tidal restoration. DOT replacing bridge at Old Bath Rd./Old Brunswick Rd.
- Tidal restoration projects
  - Wallace Shore Road
  - Monitoring – other sites
- Old Pownal State School Dam
- Water bond
- Green crab investigators meeting, 10/8/14.
  - Impacts on eelgrass, salt marsh
  - Maquoit Bay – Freeport resident interest in eelgrass restoration. Make sure to coordinate.

### **Short-Term Priorities**

#### **Smaller coastal streams**

- Take a comprehensive approach to addressing issues on small coastal streams: water quality issues, connectivity, erosion, nutrient inputs

#### **Tributaries to major rivers**

- Identify major sources of impacts to bay (in a set time period)

#### **Eelgrass restoration**

- Pilot test planting of eelgrass plots to inform efforts to restore eelgrass beds



- Funding
- Long term monitoring?

#### Royal River dams

- Fish passage decision, including consideration of whether to remove the lower main stem dam at East Bridge Street, on hold until harbor dredging is completed
- Continue CBEP participation in a Town-formed stakeholder/technical committee

#### Presumpscot River fish passage

- Current focus is on how to achieve fish passage at Saccarappa Dam in Westbrook. Successful request to extend FERC license requirements at Saccarappa to May 2017. Town, SAPPI, interveners working together to explore fish passage options that incorporate recreation and aesthetic considerations.

#### State Wildlife Action Plan

- Maine's SWAP is being revised, led by IFW & DMR with input from partners.
- SWAP is doing a lot of this thinking already, looking at stressors, vulnerability, priority species & habitats, species of concern/interest.
- Integrating a focus on coastal and marine Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their habitats working with DMR, partners
- Whole plan is looking more at priority habitats using TNC's habitat categories
- There is also the need to find a balance working on species that are relatively common in Casco Bay, and maintaining those.
- CBEP should participate in the SWAP process and tie into recommendations.
- Eelgrass - priority habitat type in SWAP. Note: no plans @ DMR to map. So this would be interesting.
  - Some plants may be incorporated into SWAP as habitat. MNAP priority plants
- DMR looking at intertidal and subtidal habitats, stressors
- Tools developed – may be able to work through these as well

#### Long Term Priorities

- Bring together folks working on habitat Cultivate working relationships with conservation groups, land trusts, NGOs, agencies to identify needs/gaps, work together to make resources (\$) go further
  - I.e., provide the match for IFW CW grants to secure a greater amount of federal funds, etc. Habitat and goals for 2015 workplan.
- Sensitive/at risk habitat acquisition, conservation easements, preservation
- Criteria
  - Opportunistic
    - Reactive, nimble, falls at your feet
    - Is it something you want to pick up and run with or not
    - Opportunities before it's too late
  - Long-term
    - Strategic, chip-away



- Higher level prioritization that informs strategic
  - “Emerging issue priorities”
- Implement resiliency
  - How do you protect shoreline and protect, restore, enhance habitat
  - Dam removal for flood resilience
  - Land protection for marsh migration
  - Coastal wetland restoration to help deal with climate change
- Wells NERR
  - Sandy dialogues – municipal officials from Maine to NJ to tour impacted areas and protected areas due to salt marsh remaining
  - Then NJ came up here to talk about protection of infrastructure
- **We need a way to identify what the priority habitats are.** Clear goals. Threats? Focus areas. Specific species.
  - What are the criteria for determining what the priority habitats are?
    - Could be threats, could be science gaps, resiliency, habitat for rare and endangered species, habitat that’s for sale
  - Our job is to figure out how we can construct a shared vision of some sort
    - Different members of the community have different goals
  - Strategic visions are generated from the top down
  - Organizational mandate – what is that for CBEP?
    - Mission statement – we do have a larger statement but EPA goals
  - What are the issues that resonate with our community
- What are the priority habitats? Where? Bay? Coastline? Whole watershed?
  - Habitats → Ecosystem resilience, sustainability of function
  - Balance between opportunistic work and long term strategies
  - Need for higher level prioritization that informs strategic work.
  - SWAP is doing a lot of this thinking already, looking at stressors, vulnerability, priority species & habitats, species of concern/interest.
- Recommendation example: CB – in the next two years, we will develop a prioritization framework working off the work that Jed, Josh, WAP have initiated.
- **Create a matrix for evaluating habitat restoration and protection priorities.**
  - What are the organizations working in that area (stakeholders)? Conduct a situational assessment.
  - What are the benefits, values (ecosystem services) that a habitat provides?
  - Look into other efforts and initiatives we could learn from.
  - What are the science/data gaps? What information do we need to have to do a better job of managing habitat in Casco Bay?
  - What partners do we need?
  - Are there things we can lay out in smaller categories?
  - Identify - what data should be incorporated?
    - Lean on the SWAP
      - habitat priorities
      - threat assessment
      - Priority species.



- What are the habitats & issues that resonate with the community?
- Identify organizations working in that area (stakeholders)
  - Conduct a situational assessment
- Benefits, values... ecosystem services
- Relate known data and environmental data to habitat restoration & protection.
  - Incorporate data such as threats, science gaps, resiliency, habitat for rare and endangered species, or habitat at risk of development.
- What is the organizational mandate for CBEP?
- What are the large-scale issues for the Bay?
- Are there other habitat types that would have high value to the Bay? Data gap, small coastal streams
  - E.g., habitat for water quality
  - E.g., Little River as a source of sediments to the Presumpscot. What are small streams putting into the Bay? Does that matter?
  - More bacterial monitoring on coastal streams? Human health component.
- Vulnerabilities
  - Seaweed harvesting
- Sea level rise planning
- "Keeping species that are common in Casco Bay, common"

#### Significant habitats in Casco Bay - What does Casco Bay have of significance at a state wide scale?

- Lean on the SWAP...

#### Smaller coastal streams

#### River systems

- Diadromous species
  - River herring/alewives; smelt, eels
  - waters that have ability to maintain habitat for diadromous species
- Barriers, connectivity.

Eelgrass meadows → trend is reversed. Develop the knowledge to restore

#### Tidal mudflats

- Shellfish beds
- Wading bird habitat

Bluffs (sediment role for flats, marshes)

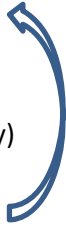
#### Undeveloped shoreline (coast, riparian)

- Watershed - sources of pollution to Casco Bay
  - Figure out major water quality sources of nutrients, sediments
- Think in terms of sustainability of ecosystem function in the context of changing Bay
  - Watershed - sources of pollution to Casco Bay
  - Ecosystem functions & ecosystem services
  - Shift at federal level from "restoration" to "resiliency".
    - How do you implement resiliency by protecting shoreline and protecting, restoring, enhancing habitat?



- Nationally, the conversation is expected to move in the direction of societal vs. purely habitat benefits. E.g., dykes, tide gates; dam removal for flood resilience; Land protection for marsh migration.

#### Approach:

1. Planning
  2. Prioritization
  3. Implementation
    - a. Protection (land, or water quality)
    - b. Resilience, restoration
    - c. Monitoring
- 
- Adaptation

#### Connections to other Working Groups:

- Resiliency → important link. Bones of priorities
- Community/people
  - Undeveloped shoreline
  - Recreation
  - Benefits, services
  - Land use – impacts on water quality, habitat
- Living Organisms
  - Critical habitat for species of interest/concern
  - Marine life and their habitat
- Water quality
- Data/science