

Managing Maine's Nearshore Coastal Resources

Report of the Bay Management Study

To the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
in response to PL 2003, c. 660, Part B



A Resource of Vital Importance

Maine's identity is tied to the ocean. With over 5,000 miles of coastline and nearly two million acres of public submerged lands, Maine's coastal waters have provided people with bountiful food, transportation, and spiritual inspiration. In 2004, it was estimated that Maine's coastal economy employed 45,685 people and resulted in \$1.2 billion dollars in annual wages.

Growth and Change

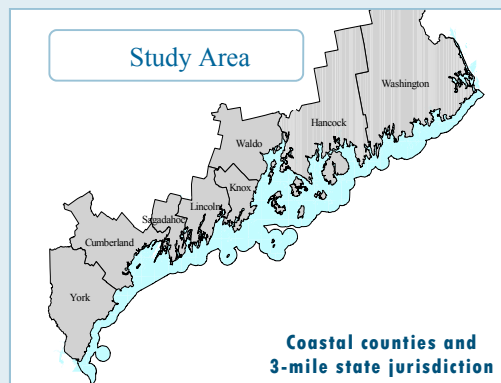
Our uses of the sea are changing and intensifying. Aquaculture has joined traditional fisheries as an economically significant use. Sea kayaks and other types of recreational watercraft have joined fishing boats at town landings. More second-home buyers and retirees have joined coastal communities that, for generations, have been home to families that earn their living on the water.



Oyster aquaculture raft, Damariscotta



Kayakers at Pretty Marsh Harbor



Examples of user conflicts along Maine's coast

| Activity-based Conflicts | Perspective-based Conflicts |
|--|--|
| Competition at public boat ramps, especially between recreational boats and commercial users | Some waterfront owners oppose commercial uses of water such as aquaculture |
| Lobster gear in channels presents challenges to boaters and trawlers | New water access sites often opposed by local residents |
| Increase in recreational boaters with no safety training creates hazard for other boaters and swimmers | The siting of nearshore energy development projects is contentious |

With Maine's coastal waters under growing pressure, user conflicts and environmental degradation will likely increase. At the same time, there are signs that Maine's current methods of nearshore management need improvement. Without embarking on these improvements to management, the health of the marine environment, the livelihoods and recreation that depend on it, and the essence of Maine's character may be at risk.

The "Nearshore"

Bays, or embayments, are relatively shallow, semi-enclosed coastal water bodies. Maine has many types and sizes of bays, as well as open coastal areas. The term "nearshore" is used in this study to be more inclusive of both bays and open coastal areas, and refers to both the water and land immediately adjacent to the coast.



Jasper Beach, Machias

Pilot Projects

Two community-based groups were each provided \$20,000 and a staff liaison for a year.

The Friends of Taunton Bay compiled data and maps about the bay and its uses, and developed management principles.

The Quebec-Labrador Foundation, Inc. formed the Muscongus Bay Committee to identify regional concerns and create maps.

Lessons learned from these projects helped advance understanding of place-based nearshore management in Maine.



Map review, Muscongus Bay Forum, Waldoboro

Are We Managing Effectively for Present and Future Challenges?

At the direction of the Maine Legislature, an interagency staff team from the State Planning Office and the Department of Marine Resources engaged with coastal stakeholders, assessed two local pilot projects and conducted research over a two-year period to examine questions such as:



Public Meeting, Ellsworth

- ◆ How are nearshore resources currently used? What are anticipated trends?
- ◆ What concerns do Maine's citizens have about coastal resources?
- ◆ How do federal, state and local entities currently manage nearshore resources?
- ◆ What can Maine learn from other models of innovative management?
- ◆ What improvements in data and information are needed for effective management?
- ◆ How can limited state resources finance needed improvements? What new resources are needed?

A diverse, eight member citizen steering committee provided advice to staff and the commissioners of state resource-related agencies (the Land and Water Resources Council) provided direction and approved the study for submittal to the Legislature.

Key Findings

- ◆ Coastal management could be improved by using a regional scale. Yet, there is currently no recognized forum to advance regional nearshore management.
- ◆ Supporting regions to discover and act on their own issues (in accordance with clear state goals) will permit nearshore management to respond to regional differences rather than be a one-size-fits-all approach.
- ◆ There is a major gap in nearshore data and information. The data that does exist is very difficult to locate and gather.
- ◆ Seven state agencies, six federal agencies and coastal towns all have major roles in nearshore management. This can be confusing to the public (see diagram on page 4).
- ◆ Existing coastal programs are working with limited budgets. Efforts to improve coastal management should not divert from existing programs.



Machias Lodge Lighthouse

Taking Steps Towards A New Vision

In the Future...

- ◆ Maine's coastal and marine resources are among the most healthy, productive, and resilient natural systems in the world.
- ◆ Effective management and active citizen stewardship achieves a balance between conservation and development that ensures the sustained use and enjoyment of coastal resources by current and future generations.
- ◆ Human impacts on coastal ecosystems are managed in a holistic way that addresses multiple stressors on a complex and dynamic ecosystem.
- ◆ Comprehensive, up-to-date data and information informs public and private management decisions.



Harvesting mussels at Pretty Marsh Harbor

"Nearshore Management"

In this study, the term "nearshore management" refers to a combination of existing and new programs and regulations, with a focus on regional coastal management.

The term "bay management" was found to be confusing, meaning different things to different people. This study does not recommend a new bay-by-bay management structure or a division of the coast into management districts. Rather, it recommends a suite of changes to the State's approach to nearshore management that will better protect the integrity of Maine's nearshore areas for use by current and future generations.

Study Recommendations

To realize this vision, Maine's current methods of nearshore management need improvement in four core areas:

Move towards regional management of nearshore waters

Regional nearshore initiatives provide a method to examine issues at relevant ecosystem and social scales, and to engage local stakeholders in the management of nearshore areas.

The State should encourage and support regional initiatives with:

- ◆ limited support (e.g., workshop design and facilitation; data collection and interpretation; writing a management plan)
- ◆ funding or sustained support for specific projects; and
- ◆ encouraging interlocal agreements.

Increase the amount, availability and accessibility of nearshore data and information

In order to address the limitations in nearshore data that constrain efforts to improve coastal management, the State should:

- ◆ create and implement a long-term coastal marine science plan to identify and acquire needed data; and

- ◆ enhance information exchange and marine geographic information systems.

Improve the state's framework for nearshore management

A strengthened framework for nearshore management will help Maine achieve its coastal vision and support regional initiatives. The State should:

- ◆ implement interagency coastal strategic planning;
- ◆ establish a policy-level oversight committee;
- ◆ improve outreach; and
- ◆ conduct ongoing evaluation of nearshore management.

Increase the amount and diversity of funding sources

To support the implementation of the recommendations, the State should:

- ◆ maintain current funding for existing priorities; and
- ◆ secure additional support for enhanced programming (e.g. create partnerships with NGOs to secure new funding sources).

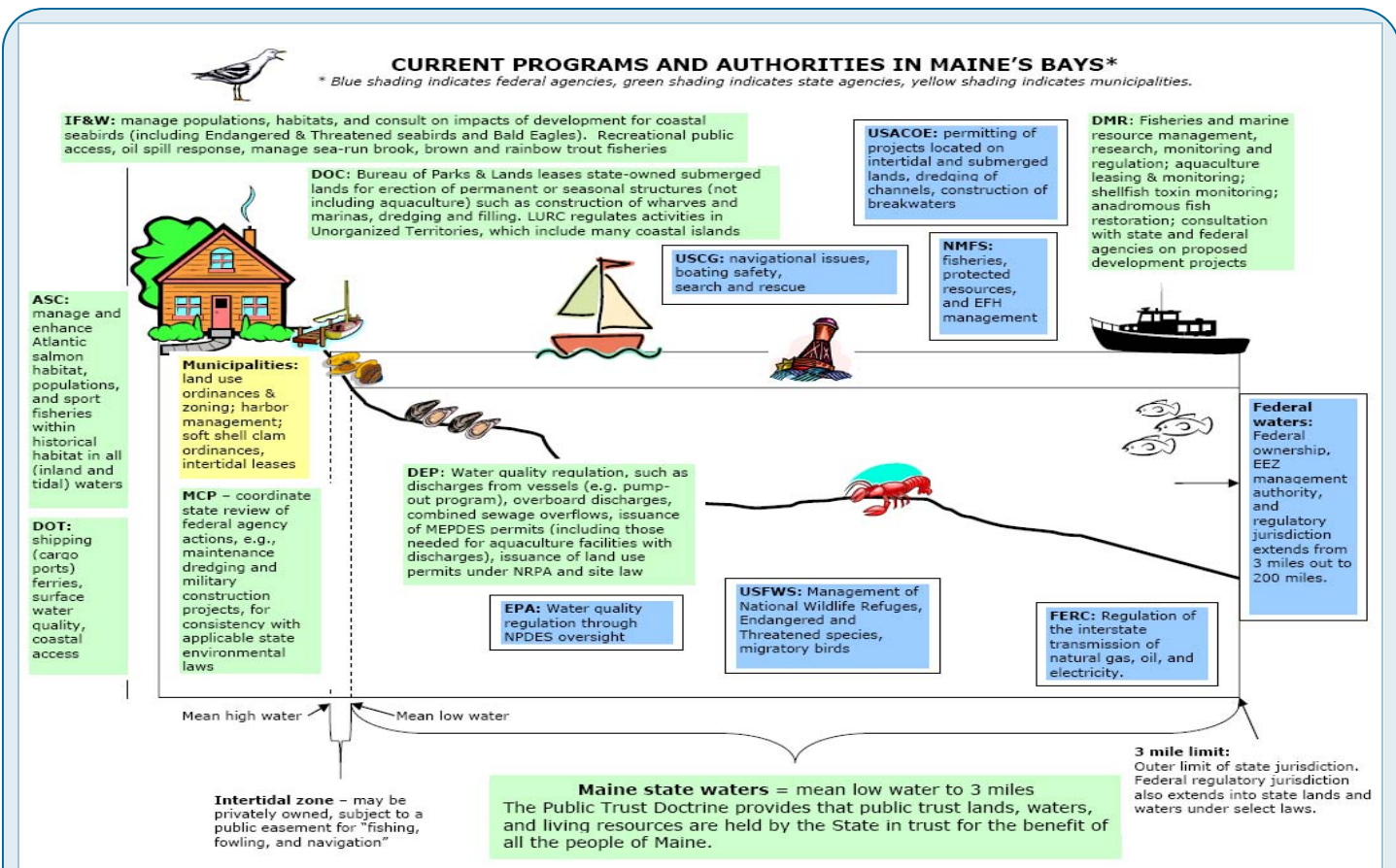


Stonington Pier

Criteria for Regional Initiatives

To be eligible to receive funding or staff support, a project should:

- ◆ Support state nearshore management goals
- ◆ Demonstrate appropriate stakeholder participation
- ◆ Demonstrate sufficient capacity to carry out tasks
- ◆ Conduct work on a regional scale
- ◆ Use best available data and information



Nearshore resources are currently managed by a complex mosaic of state, federal and local entities. A key recommendation of this report is to improve the framework for coastal management to encourage interagency strategic planning, create a state-level policy oversight committee, and conduct periodic evaluations.

A Beginning...

The improvements to nearshore management recommended by this study are purposefully incremental in nature given current capacity, funding and available information. They are intended to be the first steps in advancing towards integrated, ecosystem-based nearshore management in Maine in an effort to protect the valued qualities of Maine's coast.



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