

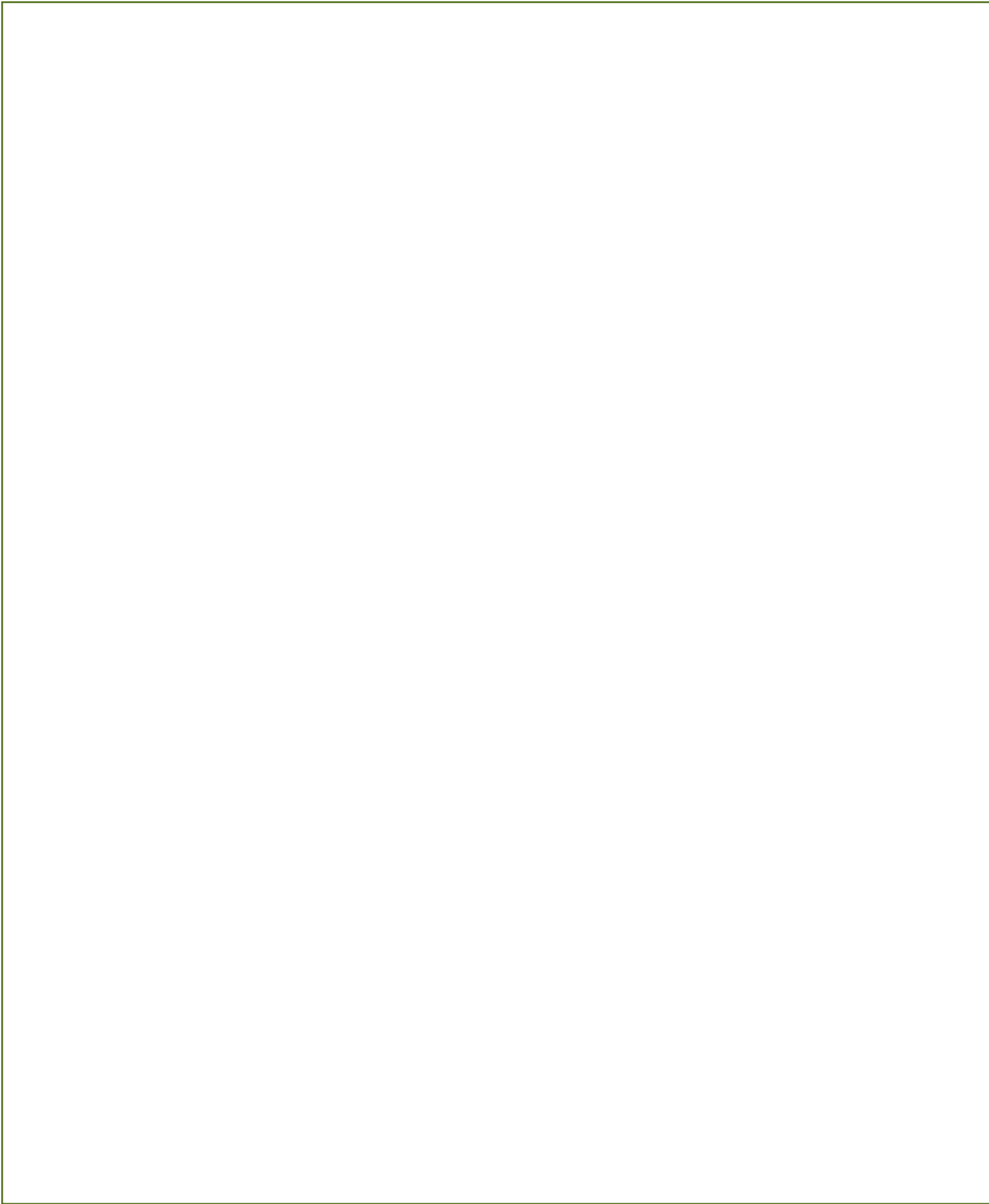
SEASCAPES

Getting to Know the Sea Around Us

A Guide to Characterizing Marine and Coastal Areas



QUEBEC-LABRADOR FOUNDATION
Atlantic Center for the Environment



SEASCAPES: Getting to Know the Sea Around Us

A Guide to Characterizing Marine and Coastal Areas



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Foreword

I once heard Maine described as the most “local” state in the nation. The vitality of the citizen conservation and resource management movement really underscores that sentiment. We have a wealth of small land trusts, watershed groups, lake associations, and conservation committees. In recent years, there also seem to be more and more saltwater friends groups, alliances, and resource centers focusing on coastal and ocean waters. For many reasons, people are increasingly interested in the harbors, bays, and sounds along our coast.

A group that decides to focus its energy on a particular place—whether marine or terrestrial—usually decides at some point that they need to describe it from both an ecological and a human-use perspective. In fact, I suspect that is why many of you reading this page are sitting down with *Seascapes*.

If your place is terrestrial, there is a small army of people and resources available to assist and support you. There are professionals who conduct ecological inventories, as well as a range of acceptable protocols and standards for these studies. There are government agencies and non-government organizations that track important habitats and species. Other ones monitor and report on uses and use trends. Maine has a number of GIS service centers with well-developed mapping capacities. There are larger institutions that can act as partners and help to leverage extra expertise and resources. We are also fortunate in New England to have private donors, government programs, and charitable foundations, which target their giving to support terrestrial inventories and the collection, storage, and communication of information necessary to produce them.

If your place is salty and wet, however, you are starting from scratch. Or you were, until the development of this guide. Although *Seascapes* doesn’t provide area-specific, ready-made information, maps, or datasets, it does provide readers with a better understanding about what it is they need to know and where they can look for it.

Before this guide, groups couldn’t make much progress in characterizing a marine area unless they hooked up with a larger institutional partner who could guide and direct the study, provide resources, and help secure funding. Not all areas of the coastal sea, however, command the same level of attention or interest of these bigger players. Some areas, although of tremendous interest and concern to those living in them, aren’t often on the radar screen of experts addressing state, regional, or national issues. Without a major partner, even finding authoritative information about what a marine area characterization is can pose a formidable obstacle.

Seascapes hopes to ease this challenge by providing a reliable and accessible overview of what constitutes a comprehensive characterization, as well as ideas for finding, developing, and communicating data from these projects. The ideas presented here are based on the experiences of experts who come from many of the state’s leading marine and coastal institutions, including federal and state agencies, universities and colleges, and non-government organizations. Over 20 representatives from these groups came together over a year-long series of workshops to develop the recommendations in this guide. They had no model or road map for what had to be in it. What is found in these pages is based on their combined knowledge, experience, and judgment, as well as information about a variety of characterization-related projects that have taken place in recent years in the Gulf of Maine and beyond. Although their recommendations apply well beyond this one state, the appendix of sources was developed with just Maine projects in mind. Additional appendices could be created, however, to extend the guide’s benefits to other states and provinces.

As a bi-national conservation and community service organization, QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment would welcome the transfer of this resource to other areas in its programming region. For readers unfamiliar with QLF, it may be surprising to hear that it is a 50-year-old organization. With small headquarters in Ipswich, Massachusetts and Montreal, Quebec, QLF programs take place all over New England and eastern Canada in response to the needs of rural, resource-dependent communities. Our Marine Program,

which began in 2002, advances community-based management of marine resources and areas through technical assistance, capacity-building, policy development, and education. QLF also has a robust suite of international programs which facilitate peer-to-peer learning between natural and cultural heritage professionals in our home region and in Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. To learn more about QLF, visit our Web site at www.qlf.org.

For QLF's Marine Program here in Maine, *Seascapes* is a start, as well as an experiment. In offering this resource, we join all those who helped produce it in acknowledging that there is still much to be learned about marine characterization studies and how to provide useful guidance about them. We recognize that even with this introduction to the work, your real challenge is the one ahead—planning, preparing for, and implementing a study in your marine area.

And to that list we have one more task to add. Please consider helping us improve this guide in the future. Its real value will only be revealed when it is put to the test. So when you get the time and inspiration, send us your comments, ideas, new sources, or any other information you think would improve the utility of *Seascapes*. We will do our best to incorporate your suggestions as soon as we can.

Jennifer Atkinson, Director
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October, 2007

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Overview

In recent years, people have sought to bring together information about the ocean and coast in a way that fosters more holistic understanding of the ecosystem and improved management of human activities. Collectively, these information-gathering and -sharing efforts can be referred to as marine area characterizations. In the past, the people who did the projects may have called them something else—maybe research, monitoring, assessments, or simply studies—but they are part of a growing trend. The need and desire for information about the sea and shore has never been greater.

Perhaps a particular local issue has gotten you interested in learning about the bay near your home. Perhaps you work at a government or non-government organization involved in ocean and coastal management, and you need to make decisions based on comprehensive information about a particular geographic area. Perhaps you have some other reason for wanting this type of information. Regardless, you may have found that valuable, pertinent information about your geographic area is widely scattered and no one has put it together into a useful form—a marine area characterization.

The purpose of this guide is to enable people to learn more about the ocean and coast through the process of conducting a marine area characterization. Generally, the goals of a marine area characterization are (1) to gather and integrate information about a marine area, (2) to communicate the information, and (3) to use the information to guide resource management decisions.

How does one go about characterizing a marine area in a meaningful way? What information is needed? How should the information be obtained and organized? How can the findings be communicated so they are useful? This guide answers those questions.

In many places, the information needed for effective ocean and coastal management is lacking. Many people are knowledgeable about ways to learn about and understand land areas, but few have similar experience for marine

areas. At the same time, people increasingly seek to understand the nature and human uses of the ocean to address environmental and resource management issues.

The marine area characterization process described in this document can be used to produce a well-rounded, comprehensive, and reliable compendium of information that will be invaluable for countless purposes.



Keri Lindberg

About This Guide

Section 1 describes what marine area characterizations are, why they are done, and who is involved. **Section 2** outlines the process of doing a marine area characterization. **Section 3** details the types of information that comprise a marine area characterization.

Appendix A provides a detailed list of information sources for Maine.



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