

# Gulf Log

## A big maybe for endangered species law

The Species at Risk Act (SARA), was passed by Canada's House of Commons in June by a vote of 148 to 85. It was the third attempt in nine years to pass a law to protect the country's growing list of species at risk of extinction. That list,



Minas Basin beach, Nova Scotia

prepared by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), has grown from just short of 250 species in 1993, when the federal government first promised to protect species, to more than 400 today. Though conservation groups felt the bill remained far from perfect, they supported recent amendments that strengthened habitat protection in some areas of federal jurisdiction and provisions to allow scientists to have more say on which species are listed as endangered. The Senate is expected to pass SARA this fall. Seven Canadian provinces, including Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, have laws in place to protect endangered species.

## Low frequency sonar approved, lawsuit follows

In July, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced its decision to grant the U.S. Navy a small take exemption under the Marine Mammal Protection Act to allow the Navy to operate its controversial low frequency active (LFA) sonar on two vessels over the next five years. The sonar, touted for its ability to detect submarines at long range, is opposed by many environmentalists who believe that its intense sound blasts will harm marine mammals.

NMFS's authorization came with stipulations that prohibit the Navy from operating LFA sonar within 12 miles [19 kilometers] of any coast and in marine mammal protection sanctuaries. The Navy must also shut off the LFA if the

sound source is within 1.1 miles [1.76 kilometers] of mammals or turtles to protect them from exposure to sound levels above 180 decibels (db).

The Navy will use visual monitoring, passive sonar and high frequency active sonar to spot animals. The mitigation measures will have nearly "100 percent effectiveness to detect mammals," said Ken Hollingshead, program manager for NOAA Fisheries Small Takes Program.

Russell Wray of Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Technology, an advocacy group in Maine, called the mitigation measures a "smoke-screen" since LFA sounds travel extraordinary distances through water, well beyond the 1.1 mile safety zone.

The fact used to justify the decision was that, "marine mammals would not be harmed under 180 dB," Wray said. The Navy tested LFA on blue, fin, gray and humpback whales at levels below 155 dB. There is a hole in the data, Wray said.

Under the authorization, NMFS is requiring that the Navy conduct more research into effects of LFA on marine mammals, specifically between 155 dB and 180 dB.

Within days of the decision, a coalition of environmental groups led by the National Resources Defense Council filed a lawsuit against the Navy and NMFS to block deployment of the sonar system, arguing that it could pose a threat to entire populations of whales, dolphins, seals and other marine mammals.

—Maureen Kelly

## "Small but mighty" Gulf of Maine Program honored

The Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), a statewide land conservation organization, has presented its 2002 Land Heritage Award to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Gulf of Maine Program, for its contribution to land conservation in Maine.

Jay Espy, president of MCHT, described the federal program as "small but mighty." He added that the program's staff, "truly embody the spirit of partnership that is so essential to conservation success throughout the State of Maine."

With its goal to protect the fish and wildlife resources of the Gulf of Maine watershed, the Gulf of Maine Program uses existing scientific data along with biological expertise and state-of-the-art computer mapping and database management, to analyze, identify and map important habitat. Staff members then recommend and implement measures for habitat protection and restoration. They share biological information, offer technical assistance and identify funding opportunities. Developing partnerships with a range of interested parties is a key component of the program. These include federal and state agencies, towns,

statewide conservation groups, local land trusts, watershed associations, angling clubs, industry representatives and willing landowners

Stewart Fefer, the program's director, said the award "offers us the opportunity to celebrate the partnerships that helped protect and restore thousands of acres for Maine's fish, wildlife and people."

In the past decade, the Gulf of Maine Program has helped secure more than \$68 million [CND \$105 million] in federal funding assistance for Maine conservation projects.

By working in partnership with numerous groups, the agency has played a key role in permanently protecting more than 37,000 acres [14,800 hectares] of high value fish and wildlife habitat through fee and easement acquisition; restoring more than 5,400 acres [2,160 hectares] of habitat for migratory birds; and completing 26 river restoration projects of benefit to anadromous fish including the removal of ten man-made barriers on rivers and the installation or repair of 12 fish passage facilities at existing dams.

Founded in 1970, the MCHT works to conserve coastal and other lands in Maine. The trust has protected more than 112,000 acres [44,800 hectares] including 275 coastal islands. For more information, go to [www.mcht.org](http://www.mcht.org).

To find out more about the Gulf of Maine Program contact: <http://gulfofmaine.fsw.gov>.

## Ocean commission visits New England

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, which is compiling recommendations from experts nationwide for the development of a comprehensive federal ocean policy, held a Northeast region meeting in July at Faneuil Hall in Boston. The meeting included testimonies from Robert B. Gagosian of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Rebecca Goldberg, a senior scientist with Environmental Defense and William K. Reilly, director of the World Wildlife Fund and former director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

It was the seventh of nine stops for the 16-member commission, which is conducting similar public meetings in the nation's coastal regions through September. The two-day session featured remarks by ocean scientists, government officials, environmental organizations and citizens on the impact of federal, state and municipal ocean policies on business, conservation and recreation in the Northeast.

Panelist included three members of the Gulf of Maine Council: Thomas Skinner, director of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, David Hartman, manager of the New Hampshire Coastal Program and David Keeley, acting director of the Maine State Planning Office.

Andrew Rosenberg, a member of the Commission and dean of the University of New Hampshire's College of Life Sciences and Agriculture, said all residents of the Gulf of Maine, including Canadian citizens, should feel free to contribute to the Commission's information gathering process.

"It's one of the charges to the Commission," Rosenberg said. "We have to think about international relations. United States leadership [on ocean policy] won't come without considering these factors."

A draft document, *Toward a National Ocean Policy: Ocean Policy Topics and Related Issues* can be viewed on the Commission's Web site, [www.ocean-commission.gov](http://www.ocean-commission.gov), along with a complete record of testimonies before the Commission.

The Commission's findings and recommendations will be presented to Congress and President Bush in a final report in 2003.

—Kent Curtis

## \$250,000 awarded for restoration projects; new proposals sought

The Gulf of Maine Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service has awarded \$250,000 [CND \$387,500] for 13 habitat restoration projects in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. The projects are geared to restore habitats that benefit marine resources, including anadromous fish species. The 2001-2002 projects include: Sebasticook River Channel Restoration, submitted by the Town of Newport, Maine; Quivett Creek Salt Marsh and Fish Run restoration, submitted by the Town of Dennis, Massachusetts; and Wiswall Dam Removal, submitted by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

Elizabeth Hertz of the Maine State Planning Office said the partnership between the Council and NMFS offers an opportunity to undertake habitat restoration within a regional context. "By focusing on shared resources, we will be able to multiply the benefits of the individual projects beyond their respective geographical location and strengthen the ecological systems within the Gulf," she said.

The Council and NMFS are soliciting proposals for its next round of funding. For deadline and eligibility requirements access [http://gulfofmaine.org/habitat\\_restoration\\_grants.html](http://gulfofmaine.org/habitat_restoration_grants.html). You can contact either John Catena (978) 281-9251 or Eric Hutchins (978) 281-9313 with questions about project ideas.

## New book presses aquaculture reform

The aquaculture industry in the United States and around the world will never grow to its full potential unless it radically reforms its practices and produces positive impacts on the environment and society. That is the premise of a new book called *Ecological Aquaculture* by Barry Costa-Pierce, director of the Rhode Island Sea Grant Program and professor of fisheries and aquaculture at the University of Rhode Island.

The book details specific new technologies, practices and policies that must be enacted for the industry to resurrect its reputation and gain the support of its many detractors.