Summary of Major Findings

NOTE: These findings were informed by research documented in the "Information Gathered" section of this report.

A. Ecological and Socio-Economic Conditions of the Coast

1. A variety of factors are likely to contribute to increasing diversification and intensification of human uses and related pressures on Maine's coastal ecosystems. There is potential for growth both in traditional and new, emerging uses. Given this diversity and intensity of activity, it is reasonable to expect that concerns about issues such as conflicts among user groups and adverse environmental effects will increase.

2. Information about the status and anticipated trends in coastal and marine resource quality and use is incomplete and sometimes anecdotal in nature. There are major gaps in our understanding of nearshore physical and biological processes; it is very difficult to locate and gather existing information, and there has been no concerted effort to create a robust marine GIS. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain a complete understanding of current coastal conditions and changes over time.

B. State-level Nearshore Governance

3. Seven state agencies, six federal agencies and coastal towns are involved in various aspects of nearshore management. The general trend towards increased diversification and intensification of coastal uses supports action now to invest in ensuring well-coordinated state action.

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4. Apart from the bay management study, state agencies are now undertaking or planning a number of important nearshore management-related initiatives to advance coastal management policy objectives, including initiatives in the areas of water quality, habitat and wildlife management, submerged and intertidal lands management, maintenance and enhancement of coastal infrastructure, and regionally-focused management.

5. Despite current State nearshore management initiatives, there are signs and symptoms that Maine's current methods of nearshore management need specific improvements. In particular:
   - The interface and relationship between the land and marine waters is often not explicitly considered in governance or in scientific inquiry. There is a greater need to understand and govern how land-side regulations, programs and uses impact marine health and use, and how marine regulations and use impact environmental and social conditions on land.
   - Better approaches are needed to assess and address cumulative effects of development, such as the siting of private docks and piers and the aggregate effect of individually minor activities.

6. The lack of resources for inventories, monitoring, research, enforcement and implementation of existing resources is a significantly greater concern than lack of regulatory tool(s) to address known issues. While increased funding is needed for

improving current regulatory functions, new structures for improved governance are also warranted.

C. Local and Regional Interests in Nearshore Governance

7. Most embayments in Maine are bordered by more than one town and many natural resource and infrastructure issues are more successfully managed on a multi-town or regional scale. Thus, regional bay planning or management is a more useful construct for Maine than municipal control.

8. There is a tension between having strong state priorities and vision guide future improvements in nearshore management and allowing local issues that emerge guide the direction of bay management. Strong state priorities are needed in order to make sure that public trust is protected and that coastal management achieves desired goals. However, the nature of change and types of issues are expected to vary markedly in different places along the coast, which suggests that supporting regions to discover and act on their own issues will allow coastal management to respond to regional differences, rather than be a one-size-fits-all approach.

9. While there are federal, state, and local processes for nearshore management, there is currently no forum to advance comprehensive marine and coastal management efforts on a regional scale. Regional groups and initiatives provide a mechanism for beginning to examine coastal issue on bay scale. Since regional groups will work in the area most relevant to their issues, it is not feasible at this time to establish formal boundaries for regional nearshore efforts

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10. Participants in the two bay management study pilot projects concluded that although stakeholders "want more say over what happens in their area" they do not currently desire formal authority for nearshore management. Delegation of additional authority to municipalities or other organizations for management of nearshore resources of uses is not generally requested or considered needed at this time.

11. The pilot projects cited the importance of the following types of State support:
    - Provide clear guidance and expectations without imposing a strict structure;
    - Allow initiatives to be tailored to their unique concerns and opportunities;
    - Provide scientific data and GIS support at a regional level; and
    - Maintain regular communication and coordination between regional initiatives and state agencies.

12. In addition to providing leadership and support for regional initiatives, the state is also expected to be a stakeholder in certain types of regional initiatives (i.e. those involving activities on submerged lands and involving fisheries), as the owner and overseer of public trust resources.

13. Although some state agency staff are organized on a regional basis, fostering of more regional initiatives will warrant enhanced state agency support at the regional level. Staff

attention for regional initiatives will need to be balanced with other state responsibilities and other public needs and priorities, as well as agencies' own periodic and on-going assessment of such needs and priorities.

14. While cooperative management mechanisms that have been specifically designed for nearshore fisheries management provide useful lessons and examples for other types of nearshore management efforts, these established methods do not need to be altered to allow for new types of nearshore regional efforts.

E. Public Participation and Satisfaction with Decision-making

15. As evidenced by participation in the study and pilots, Maine people want to be engaged in nearshore projects, planning and management in varying ways and to different degrees. Some people are only likely to be involved when it intersects with their direct interests, needs or livelihoods. Others are motivated to participate in broader, visioning and policy-level debates and are interested in crafting innovative nearshore governance methods. As our focus on nearshore management evolves, it is important to recognize the different levels of engagement in the process and types of issues likely to draw different groups to the table.

16. Improvements in efforts to involve public stakeholders and incorporate local knowledge in decision-making, to develop regionally-specific information, to support regional initiatives and improvements in management and regulatory programs may help avoid and minimize disagreements about state permitting decisions and conflicts regarding state policy initiatives. However, these approaches will not serve to eliminate all user conflicts, nor will they eliminate dissatisfaction with state policy approaches and decisions.

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F. Funding for New Nearshore Approaches

17. New sources of revenue will be needed to fully implement the bay management study recommendations. It is important that recommendations do not create unreasonable public expectations for existing programs (if no new resources are provided) or divert resources from other important and currently funded efforts.

G. Conclusion

18. While there is currently no widely recognized coastwide crisis, there is a persistent and pervasive sense that cumulative changes, past and potential in the nearshore environment warrant improvements in our current systems of resource protection, governance and public involvement.

19. The study's ultimate conclusion is that the type of 'bay management' that is appropriate for Maine is a mix of both existing and new activities tailored to the needs of different geographic areas. In addition, the study recommendations are decidedly incremental in nature given local, regional and state capacity, the realities of existing and potential new funding, and the amount of information available to inform our efforts. However, the

recommendations set the stage for additional work in the future, in particular, there is potential for advancement of eco-system based management and progress towards integrated, multiple use management planning.

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