

Primer on the Taunton Bay Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Project

Full report and additional information available at
<http://www.maine.gov/dmr/council/tauntonbay/index.htm>

This past legislative session, the DMR presented and the Legislature's Marine Resources Committee accepted a plan¹ to manage human uses of Taunton Bay in a manner intended to

- 1.) protect and sustain ecological functions and values, and
- 2.) manage marine resources for the long-term use and enjoyment of all citizens of Maine.

The plan contains general management goals for governance, marine wildlife, habitat, water quality, and harvested marine resources. Over the course of several public meetings in the Taunton Bay area, we found virtual unanimous agreement that these goals were a good beginning for long range management of the bay. On the other hand, the specific actions proposed to achieve the goals became more contentious.

The plan is built upon three overarching elements; science, local stewardship, and adaptive management.

Science will contribute through series of studies at levels ranging from species to ecosystems and effects of human activity.

Local Stewardship assumes that local users (harvesters and non-harvesters alike) have a role in the management and protection of Taunton Bay. While Taunton Bay remains a public bay, owned by all citizens in Maine, having access to local knowledge and participation in Taunton Bay's management is seen as key to a successful plan. An

Advisory Group to bring local knowledge and interests to the DMR Commissioner is one mechanism of several to involve local users of the bay.

Adaptive management is critical to being able to respond effectively to new threats and new information and new opportunities. Our legislature aided us this spring by amending the section of the law² that normally requires legislative approval to protect species other than those directly harvested. The public will still have full access to an open public process through informational meetings and hearings.

We at DMR hope that this process provides lessons on how to balance use and development of a public resource with its long term health and protection.

¹ Report to the Joint Standing Committee of the 123rd Maine Legislature on a Comprehensive Resource Management Plan for Taunton Bay, Maine.

² **Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §6171, sub-§5**, as enacted by PL 1997, c. 123, §2, is amended to read:
5. Rules to limit taking of marine organisms. The commissioner may adopt rules that limit the taking of a marine organism for the purpose of protecting another marine organism. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are major substantive rules, pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter II-A 2-A, except that rules adopted regarding the resource management plan of Taunton Bay are routine technical rules pursuant to Title 5, chapter 37