

Focus Area Review of Coastal Region

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2014

10:00 to 12:00 PM – MNAP Office

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| Facilitator: | Molly Docherty (MNAP) | Note taker/Recorder: | Steve Walker (MCHT) & Bethany Atkins (IFW) |
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NEXT MEETING: mid-December - TBD

Participants: Claire Enterline (DMR), Bethany Atkins & Bill Hancock (IFW), Kristen Puryear & Justin Schlawin (MNAP), Steve Walker (MCHT), Emily Norton & Slade Moore (MCP)

Committee Members not in Attendance: Barbara Vickery (TNC), Amanda Shearin (IFW)

Action Items:

- Find and distribute original boundary delineation methods and individual candidate FA justification (**Puryear**) **Completed**
- Follow up with Seth Barker on eelgrass layer and how to define priority eelgrass areas (**November 30**) (**Enterline**)
- Review and Transfer Data as outlined below to Justin/Bill (**November 30**)
- Draft maps for initial review by Coastal Committee (**Justin/Bill**) (**December 15**)
- Schedule mid-December meeting of Coastal Committee (**Molly**) (**soon**)

| Data | New Data (get to Justin/Bill) | Review Weighting |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| SGCN Occurrences (heron rookeries, bird habitats, birds, other spp.) | Bethany (with IFW Biologists) | Bethany (with IFW Biologists) |
| MNAP EOs | Justin | Justin |
| Eelgrass | Claire (new data) | Claire |
| Horseshoe crab | Claire (check status of data) | Slade (check USFWS model) |
| Seal Level Rise | Justin | Justin/Kristen/Steve |
| Coastal Resiliency (TNC) | Justin | Justin/Kristen/Steve |
| USFWS Coastal SC | Steve | Steve |
| Modeled Aquatic SGCN | Claire | Claire |
| Trawl Data | Claire | Claire |
| Undeveloped Shoreline | Justin | ? |
| SGCN Mapped (DMR) (Alewife, smelt, mussel, clam, lamprey, tomcod, other important spp.) | Claire | Claire |
| Worms? | Claire | Claire |

Next Steps:

See Draft Work Plan Outlined below....

Agenda – Minutes

In 2007 BwH staff worked with Maine Coastal Protection Initiative (MCPI) to review BwH Focus Areas that occurred in the coastal zone. Experts from DMR, IFW, USFWS, and other agencies were convened to review maps that had been enhanced with additional coastal layers that were not used for inland Focus Areas. As part of the 2014 Focus Area review for the State Wildlife Action Plan, the Focus Area Analysis Committee has been tasked with reviewing statewide areas – specifically to prioritize, eliminate, and/or add Focus Areas.

1. Review Maps, stakeholders involved, and results of MCPI process for reviewing Focus Areas in Coastal Region in 2007.

Molly gave an overview of the 2007 process to include the use of the scoring analysis conducted by Bill Duffy (contractor). Those results are now almost 10 years old, there are new data and new coastal assessments (such as sea level rise modeling), and it is a good time to revisit that process. Kristen commented on the documentation created to justify individual Focus Areas and highlight their key resources, and will distribute materials that include individual justifications, comments, and boundary considerations (action item).

Coastal feature notes from 2006/2007 were shared with DMR and IFW to review at a later date.

2. Review Coastal Focus Areas in light of criteria to designate Focus Areas (the wheel and scoring process) to determine if new criteria/spokes/methodology needed.

The Candidate Focus Area Criteria “wheel” used to identify inland focus areas was not used to nominate or screen coastal focus areas. It was noted that some Coastal Focus Areas, as they are currently delineated, would not meet the criteria for candidacy described in the “wheel”. However the scoring process and opportunity for individual review by resource experts did highlight those areas, which everyone agreed was a useful part of the process. Bethany commented that the “wheel” or something like it was a good way to make the process of identifying Focus Areas more transparent and suggested that it be modified to include coastal features or that something like it be produced through this process to keep that transparency. Kristen noted that the wheel diagram is also a useful image for presenting information about Focus Areas and the designation process.

There was consensus to update Coastal Focus Areas using an approach similar to the one adopted in the MCPI 2007 process. This would include relying on the weighted scoring system created by Bill Duffy. There was discussion of simplifying the scoring scheme given the scale of the map. The 2015 update should include new and updated data layers where they exist (see below and see action items).

3. Determine what new data might be useful in reviewing/adding/eliminating Focus Areas

Overall the group felt that a distinction needs to be made between inland and coastal Focus Areas, as terrestrial FAs are mostly land conservation opportunity driven, while coastal may rely more heavily on actions beyond traditional land conservation (for example BMPs or other management tools). An example was given in Taunton Bay, where there was a community based effort to designate no-trawl areas that eventually became regulated due to lack of cohesion/support.

There was also agreement that the coastal FA boundaries should be reviewed so that they better reflect tributaries and watersheds (if they don't already).

The group agreed that someone from the IFW Bird Group should be included in the discussion.

Question: how far up an estuary should the boundary go? Steve and others cautioned against tracing too far up an estuary – to keep those systems within the inland Focus Areas.

New/updated data for consideration (also see action items, above):

- IBAs (are these mapped?) They will be overlaid with existing Focus Areas to determine which fall in and which do not.
- Smelt
- Eelgrass: Slade recommended looking at trends over time, not a snapshot. Which data layer – historic vs. current? Should there be a minimum patch size set for the maps and scoring scheme?
- Shorebird data: Bethany noted that new shorebird data may be available but prioritized TWWH will not be available until April.
- USFWS Priority Trust Species: Still relevant? How best to use? Steve will ask Bob Houston
- Modeled marine fish data: Claire will look into whether to include trawl data
- Wading Birds: Steve will check on nationally significant islands, and look into whether there is any difference between SNI and other wader colonies?
- Heron rookeries: Make sure Heron colonies are included as IFW EO.
- Marine Worms: Proxies for important mudflats. Justin will look into whether there is any difference between marine worm mapped areas and shorebird areas.
- Marsh migration areas/SLR model: consensus to use this information to help delineate boundaries
- TNC Coastal Resilience data: What is this data set and who has it?
- Horseshoe crabs: Use modeled or core breeding areas? Claire will check on status of data. Slade will check USFWS model.
- Open water/marine subtidal areas: This generated much discussion. How do we determine cut-offs for boundary drawing purposes? What conservation actions can take place in the subtidal area if it is not proprietary? Could the conservation actions include recommended management or ultimately a marine protected area concept? Claire commented that DMR is evaluating marine habitats at a coarse level, which may inform delineation but likely the results would not result in substantial changes. If they do, the group can revisit the topic. Kristen noted that the current boundary delineation in subtidal areas, in particular around clusters of islands, was done to include the islands but not necessarily a specific distance or depth off-shore.

Question: how should barriers be considered/incorporated into the process? Molly responded that Focus Areas are meant to represent high quality habitats that support rich or unique biodiversity, rather than areas with high restoration opportunity. Barriers within Focus Areas could be used to highlight opportunity areas. Jeremy Bell at TNC may have comments on how to incorporate barrier data. Some discussion focused on features in focus areas that might need managed action like grasslands or early successional habitat but the process for how to address them was not addressed.

4. Determine a timeline, process, and players needed to conduct a 2014/15 review of Focus Areas

- **Review boundaries and rules for drawing them (November 30)**: Review current coastal FA boundaries based on documentation from Kristen (Claire)
- **Create Draft Maps (December)**: Justin/Bill
- **Convene Coastal Committee to review maps (mid-December)**
- **Review maps with relevant stakeholders – integrate with terrestrial review. Adapt wheel/create new criteria graphic based on drivers (January)**
- **Descriptions- to incorporate more marine attributes (Emily) (eventually)**
- **Determine if and how Focus Areas along the coast will be prioritized (Coastal Committee) (eventually)**