

2015 Maine Wildlife Action Plan

Conservation Partner Meeting #2

September 30, 2014

Habitat Breakout Session: Coastal/Marine

Facilitators: Charlie Todd (MDIF&W), Claire Enterline (MDMR)

Notes: Steve Walker (MCHT)

Participants: Claire Enterline (MDMR), Emily Norton (MCP), Charlie Todd (MDIFW), Ed Meadows (LMF), Lindsay Tudor (MDIFW), Beth Goettel (USFWS), Kate O'Brien (USFWS), Barbara Vickery (TNC), Judy Camuso (MDIFW), Slade Moore (MCP), Steve Walker (MCHT), Bruce Connery (NPS)

General Questions/Thoughts:

Is geographic distribution of coastal and marine habitats as key along the coast as distribution of terrestrial habitats on the mainland?

It's important to remember that the discussion is about coastal/marine habitat, not just finfish.

How much time put into breaking down taxa? What may have been overlooked? Huge diversity. Important to have equitable level of expertise for all taxa.

Need to look at all life stages of finfish and their prey interactions.

We should consider all spp. that we have "reasonable" information for.

Criteria used to assign Priority 1-3 status for marine spp., needs to be as robust and well documented as that used for terrestrial SGCN.

Given that commercially harvested species are on the list, we need to consider current exploitation status.

Need to be clear up front that the list is based on the best knowledge available and not necessarily comprehensive.

The purpose of the list is to identify spp with documented level of decline and is not necessarily a list of spp we can act on.

What is the habitat association of sea stars?

Habitat Discussion

Change salt marsh to tidal marsh in order to capture the range of salinities and natural communities represented. Consider adding submerged aquatic vegetation or eel grass to list.

The tidal/marine category seems flat. It needs to be more hierarchical. The NWI system is logical and may serve as a model.

Maybe a split between vegetated and unvegetated?

Add islands as a distinct coastal habitat type.

Consensus that subtidal waters should break down as Nearshore: muddy, mixed fines, cobble; Offshore Benthic: boulders and bedrock, mud, sand, and mixed. We should use an existing scheme to the extent possible.

Pelagic breakdown simply as nearshore and offshore.

Remaining questions regarding how best to treat vegetated subtidal variations (kelp, eel grass, corals, erect epibions, etc.).

There is a general consensus that a separate process is needed to prioritize habitats for conservation action.

There is a general consensus that ecoregion boundaries make the most sense for capturing physical variations along the coast; and, are the appropriate scale for SGCN distribution.