



Hancock County Planning Commission Blue Hill Bay Watershed Needs Assessment

The Blue Hill Bay Watershed Needs Assessment is a multi-town, multi-stakeholder initiative designed to engage these communities in a dialogue to better understand their resources, assess the status of the resources, and make informed decisions about coastal activities which impact these resources.

Friends of Blue Hill Bay
<http://fobhb.org/>



PARTNERS

Maine Department of Marine Resources; Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife; Maine Department of Environmental Protection; University of Maine Sea Grant Program; College of the Atlantic; Penobscot East Resource Center; Frenchman Bay Partners; Marine Environmental Research Institute; Acadia National Park; Friends of Blue Hill Bay; Local Land Trusts; Local Fishing Community Organizations

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (completed June 2013)

Preliminary assessment of the environmental, economic, and social assets and needs of Blue Hill Bay Watershed. The watershed is a component of integrated systems including water, transportation, housing, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, recreation, and more. Blue Hill Bay represents a cross-section of Maine's coastal resources. The bay is rich in marine life, providing employment and valuable exports.

APPROACH

This project is the direct outcome of a symposium conducted in November 2011 by Friends of Blue Hill Bay titled "Behold the Bay: a Symposium Celebrating the Marine Resources of Blue Hill Bay." Speakers emphasized the need to protect species diversity, improve conservation and management, and relate communities to healthy ecosystems. A series of meetings was held to discuss the economic importance of the bay, the status of public access, water quality, the condition of fisheries, and preparing for storm surges. A draft report was prepared and sent to stakeholders for review and comment and a series of maps were drafted to supplement the maps previously done for the Friends of Blue Hill Bay.

RESULTS

The report discusses conditions in the bay. In general, the data portray a bay with good water quality and many healthy wildlife species. The economy shows steady growth with many jobs tied directly or indirectly to the bay. The bay also confronts several challenges. Fisheries have been subject to unsustainable practices, leaving some species severely depleted. The bay also hosts several experimental and commercial aquaculture sites. Tourism and recreation are highly seasonal, creating significant employment swings. There are, however, specific water quality problems due to numerous point sources and non-point sources of contaminants. The report also revealed inadequacies of current public access arrangements.

NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Form a group of stakeholders to develop a watershed plan. Ask communities to work with state and federal agencies to implement recommendations such as more comprehensive fisheries management. Work closely with conservation organizations, the planning commission, municipal governments, and community health and economic organizations to develop solutions.

NEEDS

Funding is needed as well as continued buy-in from the partners and stakeholders. Focus future efforts on improving public access to the shore.

LESSONS LEARNED

Continuous comprehensive outreach and stakeholder involvement is labor-intensive.

APPLICABILITY FOR OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

This is a good reference process and document for coastal communities facing comparable challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MCP and other state agencies should promote public access, address fish passage, assess impact of aquaculture, preserve water quality, remove pollution sources and implement clam flat buffering programs to offset the impacts of ocean acidification.



**COASTAL COMMUNITY GRANTS:
Water Quality**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

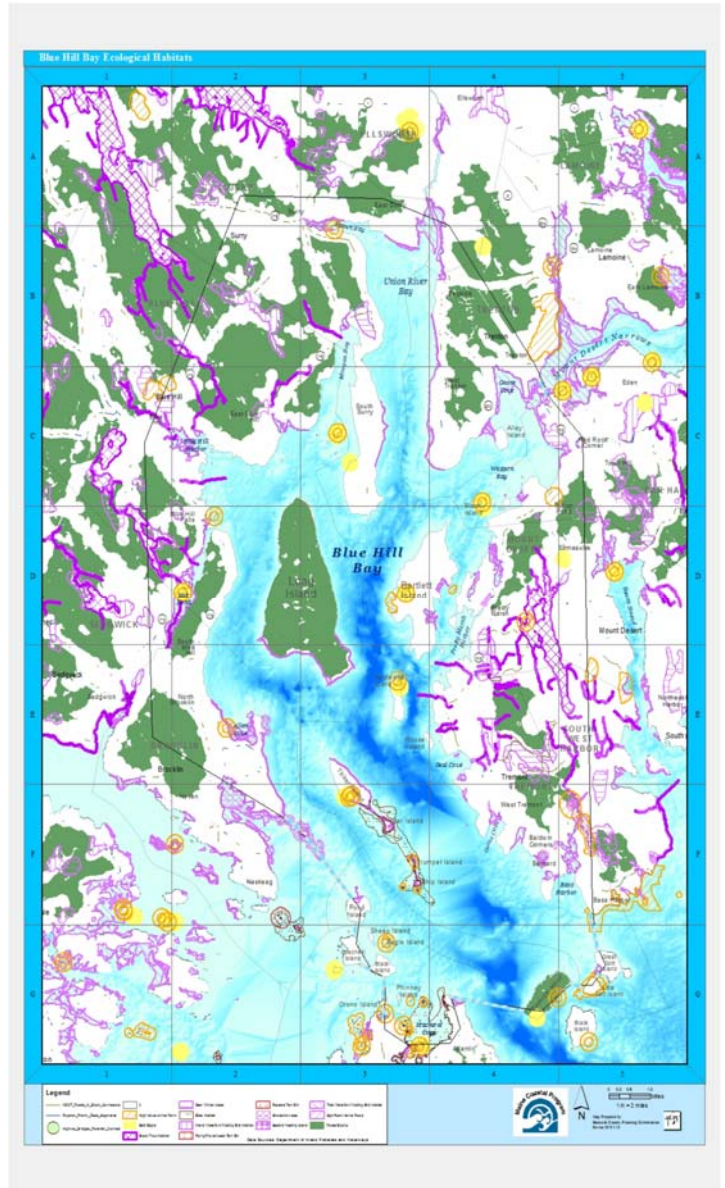
See <http://www.hcpcme.org/bluehillbay/>

CONTACT

Thomas Martin AICP Executive Director
Hancock County Planning Commission
thomas.martin@hcpc.org

James Fisher AICP, Senior Planner
(2000-2015)
Hancock County Planning Commission

Barbara S. Arter
BSA Environmental Consulting



Map 7 Blue Hill Bay Ecological Habitats

FY12 - 18
3.7.17

Financial assistance provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce Grant CZM NA11NOS4190077 to the Maine Coastal Program. Coastal Community Grants are awarded and administered by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Municipal Planning Assistance Program.

