



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle

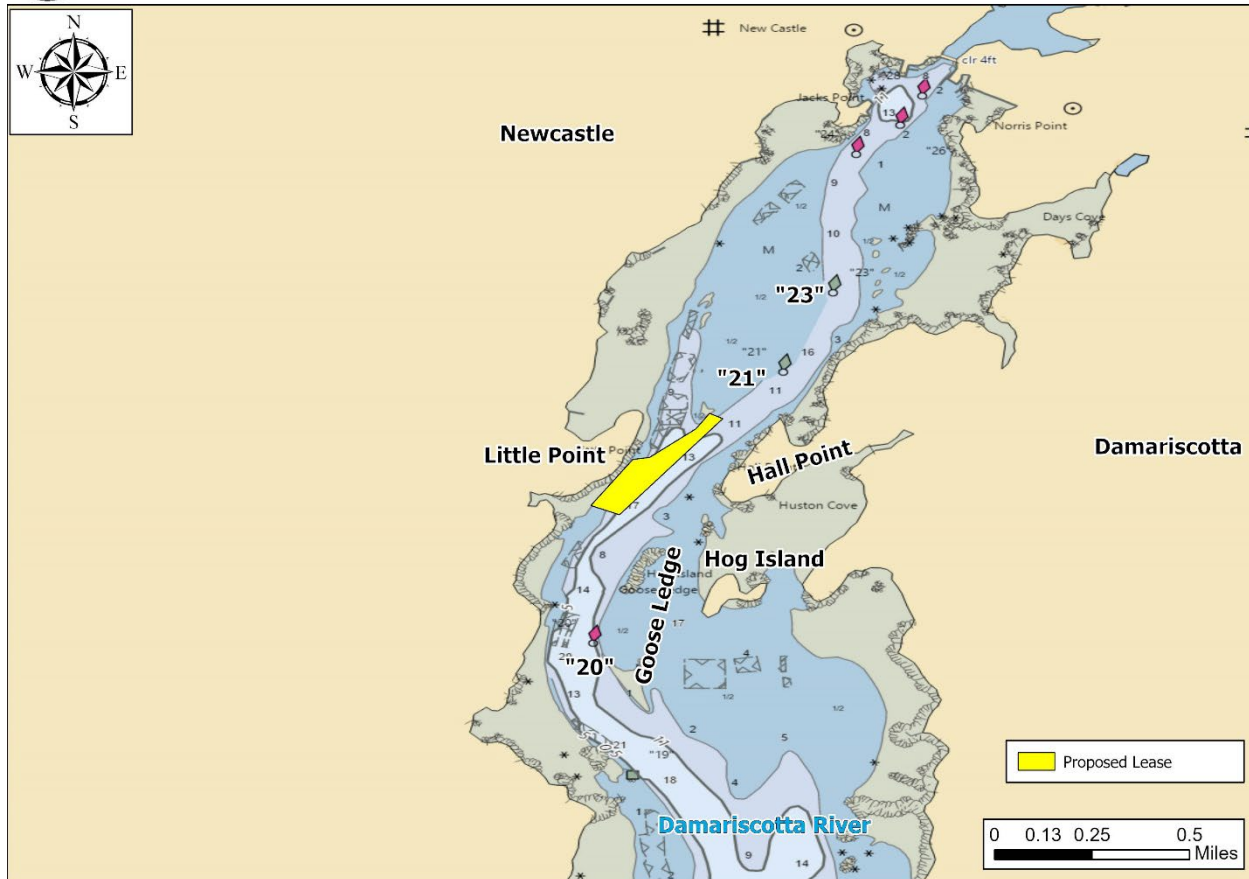


Figure 1. Vicinity map.¹

Location: East of Little Point, Damariscotta River, Newcastle and Damariscotta, Lincoln County, Maine

Purpose: Standard lease for bottom culture of American/eastern Oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*).

Site Review: Meryl Grady², Katie von Hohenleiten, and Geoff Shook³

Report Preparation: Katie von Hohenleiten, Geoff Shook, and Meryl Grady

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all figures in this report were created in ArcGIS Pro version 3.3 using digitized NOAA Nautical Charts or georeferenced aerial photographs provided by The Maine Office of GIS.

² Present for June 17, 2025 site visit

³ Present for June 26, 2025 site visit



Application Overview

The applicant, Joel Spinney, is requesting a 9.38-acre, 20-year, standard lease east of Little Point in the Damariscotta River, for the bottom culture of American/eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*). The only gear that would be on site would be the required yellow marker buoys and associated line and concrete anchors, which would be on site year-round.⁴ The site would be actively seeded throughout the year with most of the seeding during the fall and spring months. Harrowing⁵ would occur one or two times per year, consisting of one to five days of activity per occurrence from mid-March to mid-May. Harvest would be by SCUBA diver or drag and would be year-round.⁶ The applicant currently operates two Limited Purpose Aquaculture sites (LPAs) within the boundaries of the proposal (Figure 5). JSPI123 and JSPI223 would not be relinquished if this proposal is granted.⁷

General Characteristics

On June 17, 2025, Department of Marine Resources (DMR) scientists assessed the proposed lease site. DMR scientists arrived on site at approximately 9:01 AM. Due to a technical difficulty on June 17, 2025, DMR scientists were not able to assess bottom characteristics of the proposed site. DMR scientists revisited the proposal on June 26, 2025, to assess bottom characteristics. DMR scientists arrived on site at 2:00 PM on June 26, 2025. The proposal is situated along the western shoreline of the Damariscotta River and is mapped directly adjacent to the eastern shoreline of Little Point at MLW. The western shoreline of the Damariscotta River is gravelly with larger rocks and forested uplands while the eastern shoreline was rockweed covered rocky coastline with numerous piers and residential homes observed.

Depth

On June 17, 2025, DMR scientists began collecting water depths at the proposed site shortly before low tide at approximately 9:03 AM (Table 1). Measured depths at corners of the proposed lease site ranged from 1.2 to 18.1 feet. Correcting for tidal variation derives approximate water depths at corners of the proposal at mean low water (MLW, 0.0 feet) to be from 0.5 to 17.4 feet. Approximate depths at mean high water (MHW, 9.4 feet⁸) at corners of the proposal are 9.9 to 26.8 feet (Table 2). The proposal is located in the subtidal. Water current was observed to be flowing southerly then switching to northerly throughout the course of the site visit.

Table 1. Predicted tidal heights in Walpole, Maine.⁹

Date	Time	Height (ft)
2025/06/17	3:50 AM	9.5 H
2025/06/17	10:23 AM	-0.2 L
2025/06/17	4:32 PM	8.9 H
2025/06/17	10:44 PM	0.7 L

⁴ Application page 6

⁵ In this case, harrowing refers to the process of lifting oysters out of the sediment using a rake or open bag drag.

⁶ Application page 10.

⁷ Application page 14.

⁸ MHW in Walpole is 9.4 feet, NOAA Tide Station 8416731

⁹<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/noaatidepredictions.html?id=8416731>



Table 2. Collected and derived depths at corners of the proposed lease area.

Corner	Measured Depth (ft)	MLW Depth (ft)	MHW Depth (ft)
A	7.1	6.4	15.8
B	11.7	11.0	20.4
C	18.1	17.4	26.8
D	1.4	0.7	10.1
E	1.2	0.5	9.9
F	12.1	11.4	20.8
G	9.2	8.5	17.9

Bottom Characteristics

DMR scientists observed the bottom characteristics of the proposed lease site via a remotely operated vehicle (ROV). Bottom characteristics were categorized using the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS), a national standard for describing features of the marine environment (Table 3). Sediment information was determined based on visual analysis of the video. The bottom of the proposed lease site is composed of mud with general shell rubble.

Table 3. Bottom characteristics of the proposed site.

Substrate Origin	Substrate Class	Substrate Subclass	Substrate Group
Geologic Substrate	Unconsolidated Mineral Substrate	Fine Unconsolidated Substrate	Mud
Biogenic Substrate	Shell Substrate	Shell Rubble	N/A

Position and Distances to Shore

The measuring tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.3 was used to verify the distances and bearings between proposed lease corners. Distances to shore were determined using the measuring tool in ArcGIS Pro 3.3, a nautical chart provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the application coordinates (Table 4, Figures 2-4).

Application Coordinates (WGS84) – 9.38 Acres

Corner	Latitude	Longitude	
A	44.020352°	- 69.542698°	then 148 feet at 120° True to
B	44.020159°	- 69.542205°	then 1,642 feet at 217° True to
C	44.016602°	- 69.546035°	then 306 feet at 294° True to
D	44.016942°	- 69.547097°	then 744 feet at 033° True to
E	44.018647°	- 69.545542°	then 166 feet at 080° True to
F	44.018724°	- 69.544919°	then 594 feet at 050° True to
G	44.019781°	- 69.543203°	then 247 feet at 032° True to A



Table 4. Approximate distances from proposal corners to surrounding features (Figures 2-4).

Feature	Distance
Corner A to green navigation buoy "21"	~914' to the northeast
Corner B to Hall Point at MLW	~392' to the southeast
Corner B to green navigation buoy "21"	~868' to the northeast
Corner C to Goose Ledge at MLW	~538' to the southeast
Corner C to red navigation buoy "20"	~1,756' to the south
Corner D to Little Point at MLW ¹⁰	~0'
Corner E to Little Point at MLW	~24' to the west
Corner F to Little Point at MLW	~159' to the west
Corner G to Little Point at MLW	~446' to the west



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle/Damariscotta

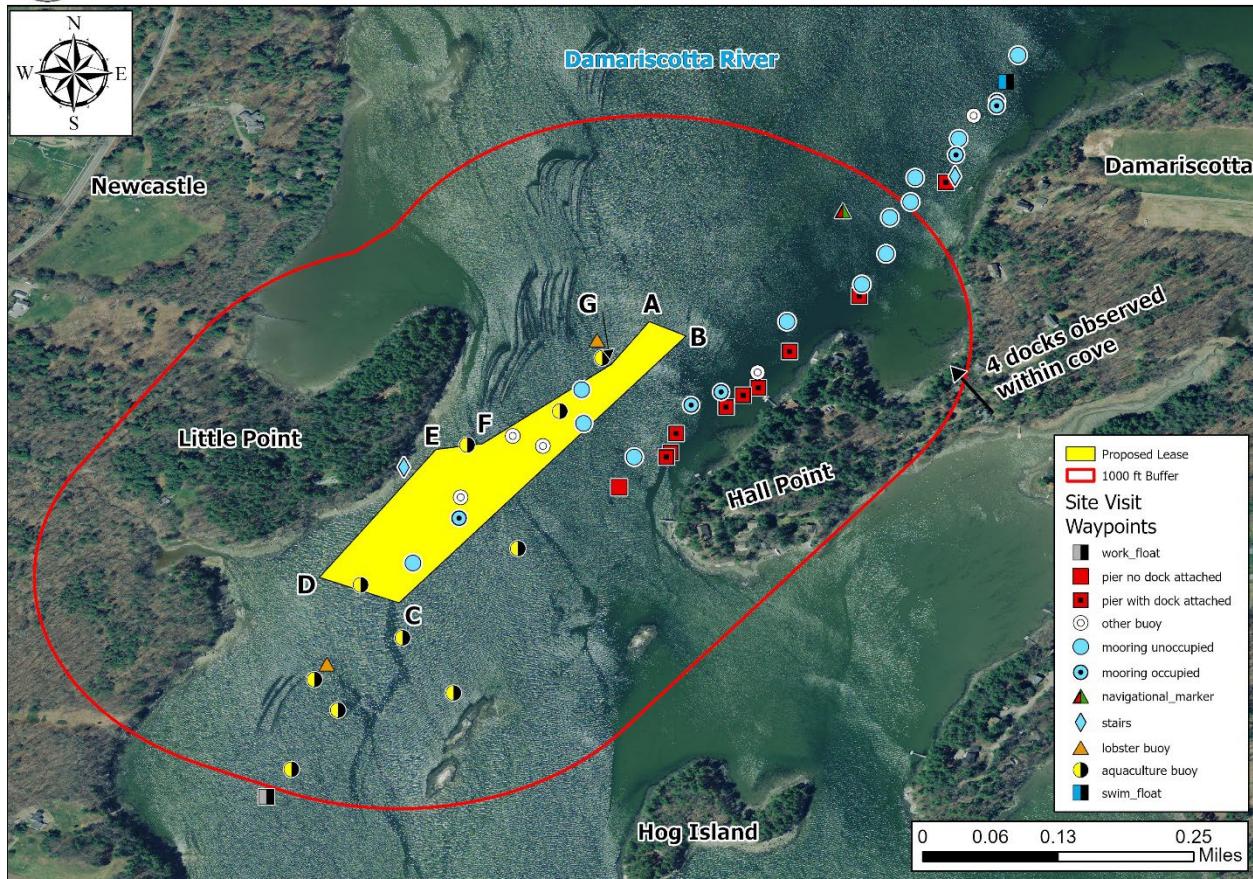


Figure 2. Proposed lease area with site visit observations.

¹⁰ Nautical charts indicate the proposal is located in the intertidal, but DMR observations and calculations indicate the proposal is located entirely in the subtidal.



Pursuant to statute and regulation, aquaculture leases are evaluated in consideration of applicable decision criteria. The Site Report documents DMR's observations of the area and other information, in consideration of those criteria, as noted below:

(1) Riparian Ingress and Egress

During the site visit on June 17, 2025, DMR scientists observed a staircase leading to shore along the western shoreline of the Damariscotta River on Little Point, approximately 141 feet southwest of corner "E".¹¹

During DMR's site visit, there were three unoccupied moorings and one mooring with an approximate 30-foot sailboat attached within the boundaries of the proposal. Additionally, there were five occupied and ten unoccupied moorings observed ranging from 219 feet to 1,804 feet east and northeast of the proposal.

Along the eastern shoreline, DMR scientists observed 13 piers ranging from approximately 267 feet to 1,178 feet to the east and northeast of the proposal. One pier did not have an associated gangway and dock in the water; 12 piers did have a gangway and dock attached. Four of the 13 piers were observed to have watercraft attached to the docks, such as kayaks or skiffs. The eastern shoreline also had one swim float approximately 1,669 feet to the north of the proposal and a set of stairs approximately 1,222 feet to the north of the proposal (Figure 2).

The proposal is located in the Towns of Newcastle and Damariscotta (Figure 3).¹² A Harbormaster Questionnaire was received by DMR from the Newcastle Harbormaster on October 29, 2024. A Municipal Questionnaire¹³ was received from the Damariscotta Harbormaster¹⁴ on November 19, 2025. The Newcastle Harbormaster Questionnaire stated that the proposal will not affect riparian ingress and egress to shorefront property, but there are riparian moorings permitted within the boundaries of the proposal. The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire added that these moorings are for recreational vessels with lengths between 20 – 24 feet. Additionally, it stated there are no docks nearby or within the boundaries of the proposal.

¹¹ The staircase was located on land at the mean high water (MHW) mark. Due to shallow water depths at the time of the site visit, DMR was not able to access the shore by boat, so DMR recorded a description of the location of the stairs. During data analysis, the stairs waypoint was generated, located, and mapped using orthorectified imagery, as seen in Figure 2.

¹² After the application was deemed complete, DMR discovered a portion of the proposal is also located in Damariscotta. DMR notified Damariscotta of the lease proposal in accordance with applicable rule and law and sent a questionnaire to complete.

¹³ When Newcastle was notified of the lease proposal, they were sent a copy of the Harbormaster Questionnaire. When Damariscotta was notified, DMR had changed the name of the questionnaire from "Harbormaster" to "Municipal" to help clarify that completion of the questionnaire was not limited to the municipal Harbormaster. Additionally, some questions were updated in the Municipal Questionnaire. This report refers to the questionnaires by their respective titles.

¹⁴ Based on the signature provided in the respective questionnaires, it appears Newcastle and Damariscotta may share the same Harbormaster.



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle/Damariscotta

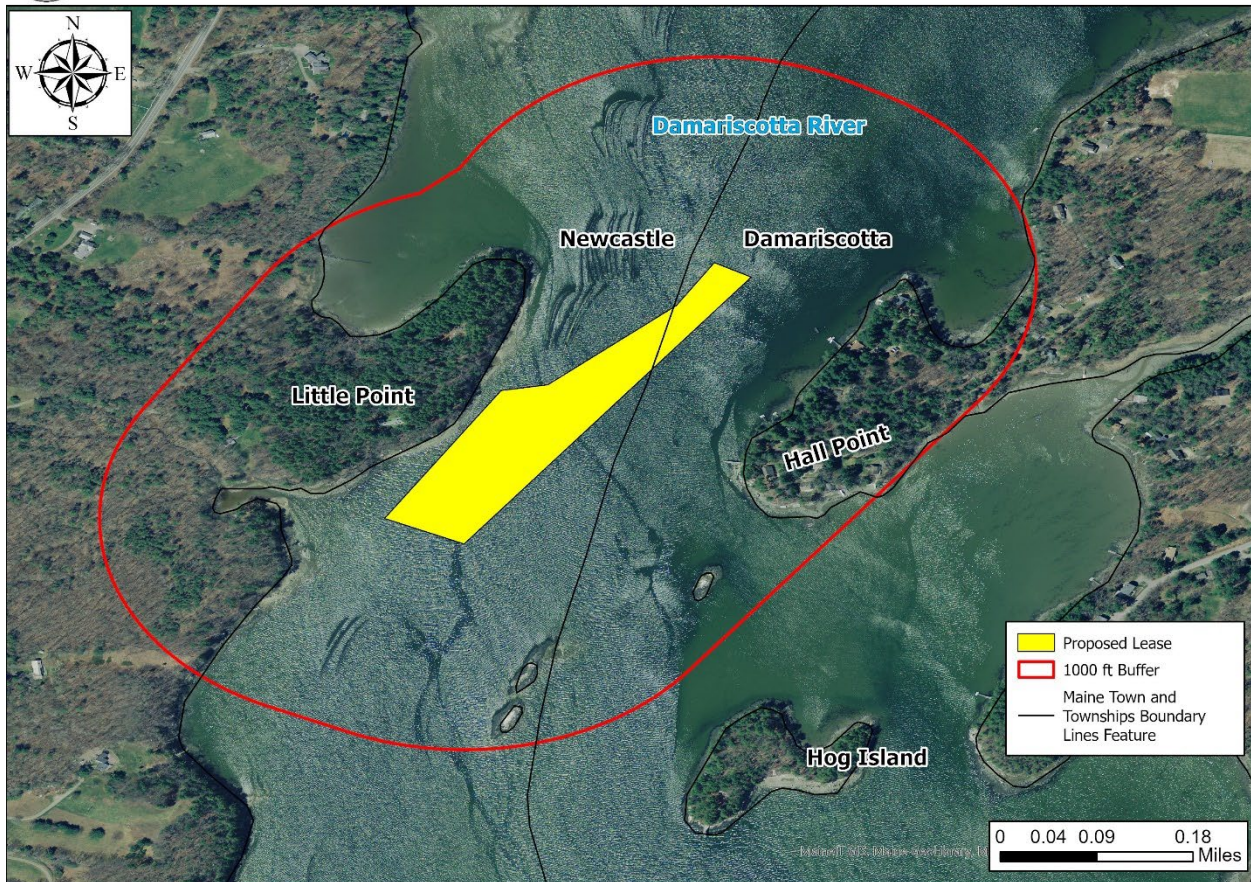


Figure 3. Proposed lease area with the Newcastle and Damariscotta town boundary line.

(2) Navigation

The proposal is located in the Damariscotta River, immediately adjacent to the Little Point shoreline at MLW. This section of the Damariscotta River is approximately 836 feet wide between Little Point and Hall Point at MLW. Corner “B” of the proposal falls within the western edge of the navigational channel by approximately 148 feet, as measured by green navigational buoy “21” and charted intertidal immediately adjacent to proposal corner “A”.¹⁵ Corner “C” of the proposal falls within the western edge of the navigation channel by approximately 306 feet as measured by green navigational buoy “21” and Little Point’s shoreline at MLW. There is approximately 538 feet of water between corner “C” and Goose Ledge at MLW (Figure 4).

No recreational traffic was observed during DMR’s site visit on June 17, 2025. There were 12 vessels associated with aquaculture observed transiting or engaged in aquaculture in the vicinity

¹⁵ Though the proposal is near charted intertidal areas, based on data collected during DMR’s site visit, the proposal is not within the intertidal zone (Table 2).



of the proposal. The observed vessels were either tending to nearby aquaculture leases/licenses or were observed transiting past the proposal with aquaculture equipment onboard the vessel.

The Newcastle Harbormaster Questionnaire indicated that the proposal would not affect navigation in the area. The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire added that there is no commercial navigation in the area, but there is recreational navigation. According to the Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire, recreational vessels for this area are mostly comprised of kayaks or small crafts ranging between 14-18 feet in length. Peak traffic in a day is typically 6 vessels navigating in a north-south direction. The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire also stated there are no storm anchorages in the area of the proposal.



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle/Damariscotta

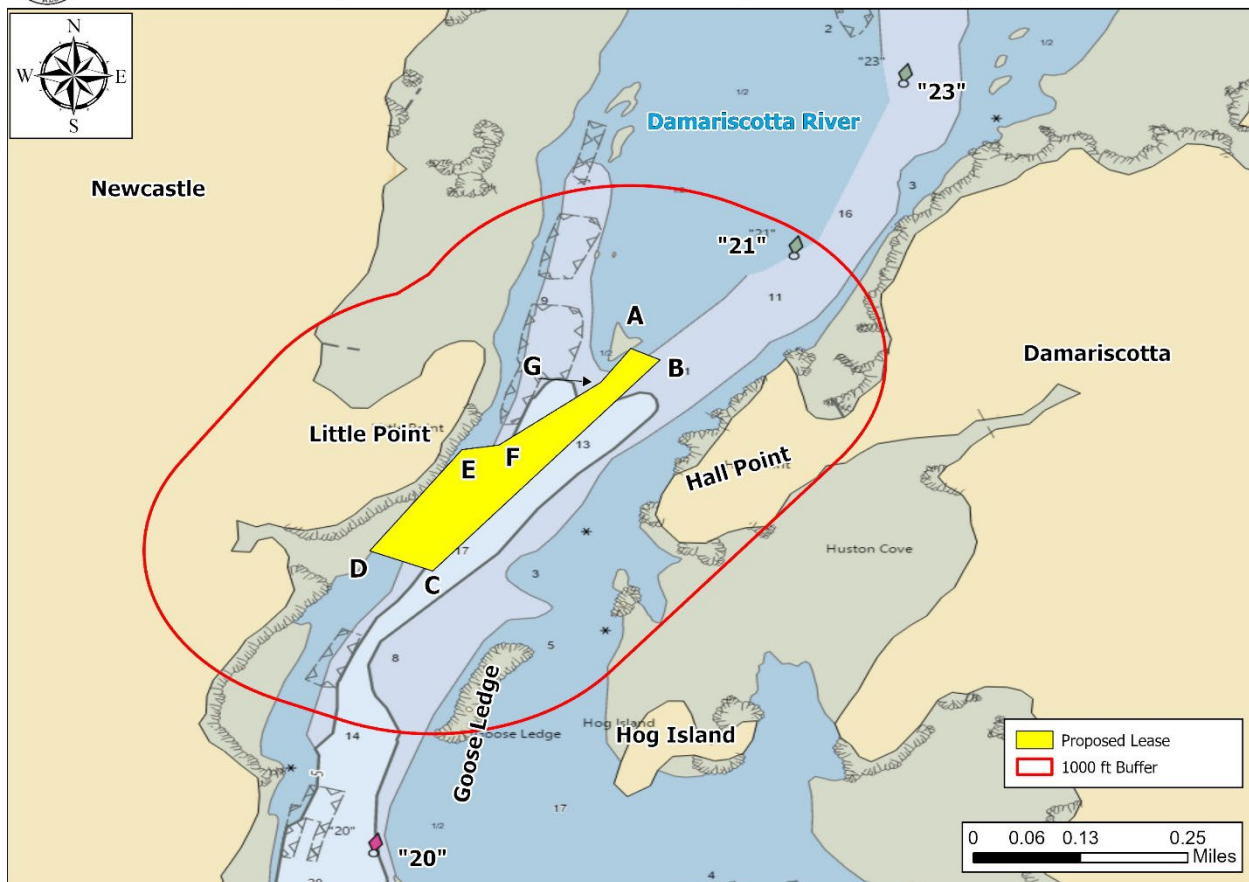


Figure 4. Navigational channels in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.



(3) Fishing and Other Uses

During DMR's site visit on June 17, 2025, no commercial or recreational fishing activity was observed within the boundaries of the proposed lease. DMR observed an individual possibly harvesting from the intertidal zone along the southern tip of Hall Point to the east of the proposal, but DMR scientists could not determine what was being harvested. DMR scientists also observed two lobster buoys within 1,000 feet of the proposed lease. The closest lobster buoy was observed approximately 109 feet west of the proposal. The second lobster buoy was observed to be approximately 370 feet south of the proposal. Additionally, DMR scientists observed three buoys with unknown purposes within the boundaries of the proposal on June 17, 2025 (Figure 2). One buoy was blue in color and was labeled "DMC" (Image 1). The second buoy was white in color and was unlabeled (Image 2). The third buoy was blue in color and was unlabeled (Image 3).

Image 1 (left). Blue "DMC" buoy observed within proposal boundaries on June 17, 2025.

Image 2 (right). White, unlabeled buoy observed within proposal boundaries on June 17, 2025.





Image 3. Blue, unlabeled buoy observed within proposal boundaries on June 17, 2025.



The Newcastle Harbormaster Questionnaire indicated there is very light commercial and recreational fishing within the area of the proposed lease. The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire indicated there is no commercial fishing in the vicinity of the proposal, but there is recreational fishing for striped bass in this area from May through September. The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire also indicated there is kayaking in the vicinity of the proposal. On a peak day, there may be four kayaks in the area.

(4) Other Aquaculture Uses

There are two LPAs and four aquaculture leases within 1,000 feet of the proposal. The applicant currently operates two LPAs within the boundaries of the proposal, JSPI123 and JSIP223. The applicant does not intend to relinquish the LPAs if this proposal is granted. There are four standard leases in the general vicinity of the proposal. DAM EL3 is approximately 50 feet north of the proposal and is held by Mook Sea Farms, Inc. DAM GL3, held by Pemaquid Oyster Company Inc., is approximately 134 feet southeast of the proposal. DAM GL2, also held by Pemaquid Oyster Company Inc., is approximately 490 feet south of the proposal. DAM HI6 is held by Blackstone Point Oysters LLC and is approximately 915 feet southeast of the proposal (Figure 5).

During DMR's site visit on June 17, 2025, DMR observed three aquaculture buoys within the boundaries of the proposal. The three buoys were associated with LPAs JSPI123 and JSPI223. Seven other aquaculture related buoys were observed in the vicinity of the proposal. These buoys were associated with other aquaculture leases in the area (Figure 2).



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle/Damariscotta

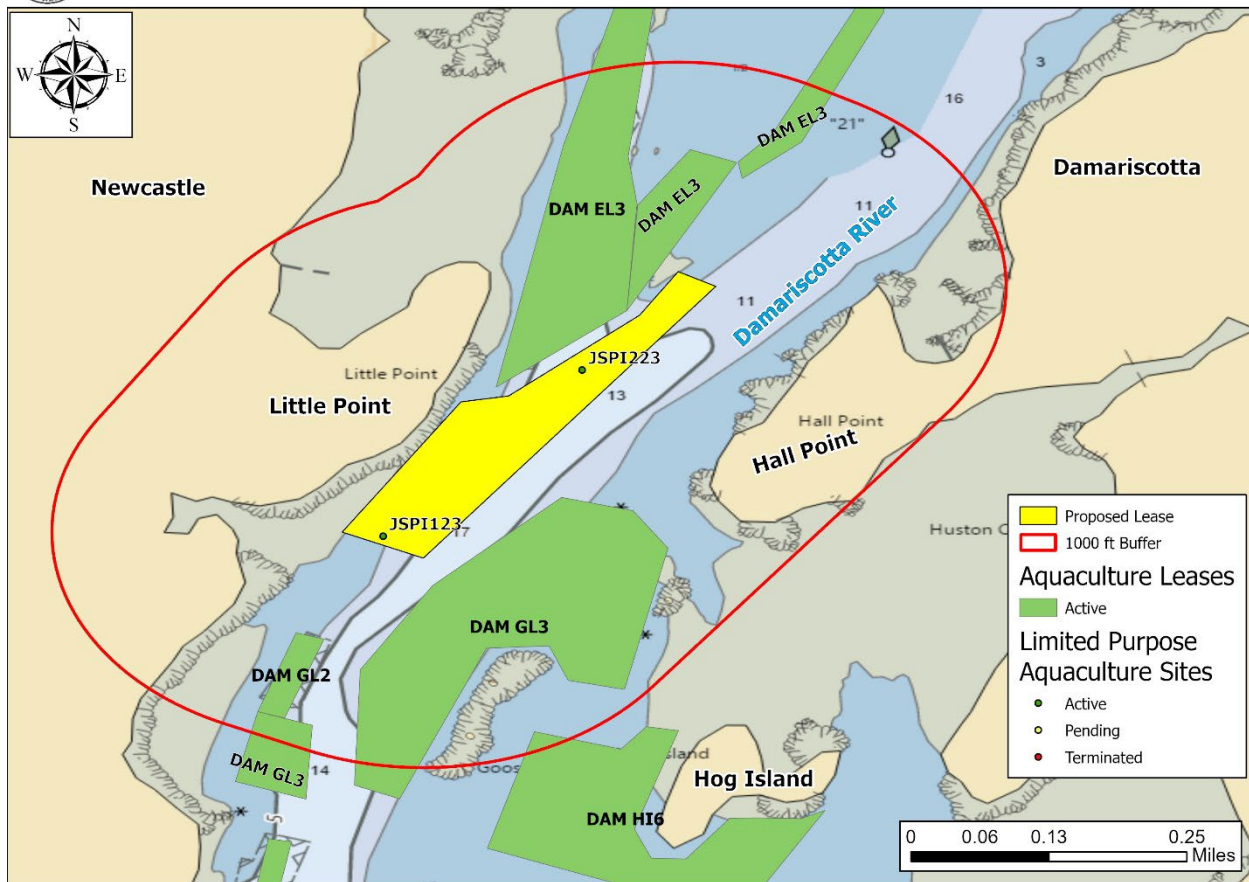


Figure 5. Aquaculture leases and LPA licenses in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.

(5) Existing System Support

Epibenthic Flora and Fauna

On June 26, 2025, DMR scientists utilized an ROV to assess the epibenthic ecology of the proposed lease. The relative abundance of epibenthic flora and fauna observed in the video footage is described below in Table 5.

Table 5. Species observed on underwater video footage.

Species Observed	Abundance
Green crab (<i>Cancer maenas</i>)	Common
Breadcrumb sponge (<i>Halichondria panicea</i>)	Occasional
Sea lettuce (<i>Ulva lactuca</i>)	Occasional



Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*)

Records of seagrass collected by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 2023 indicate no mapped eelgrass presence in the vicinity of the proposal (Figure 6).¹⁶

During the site visit on June 17, 2025, eelgrass was observed floating unattached on the surface of the water. No eelgrass was observed on underwater video footage within the proposal boundaries during DMR’s site visit on June 26, 2025.

The Damariscotta Municipal Questionnaire indicated the municipality has not observed eelgrass in the area of the proposed site.



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle

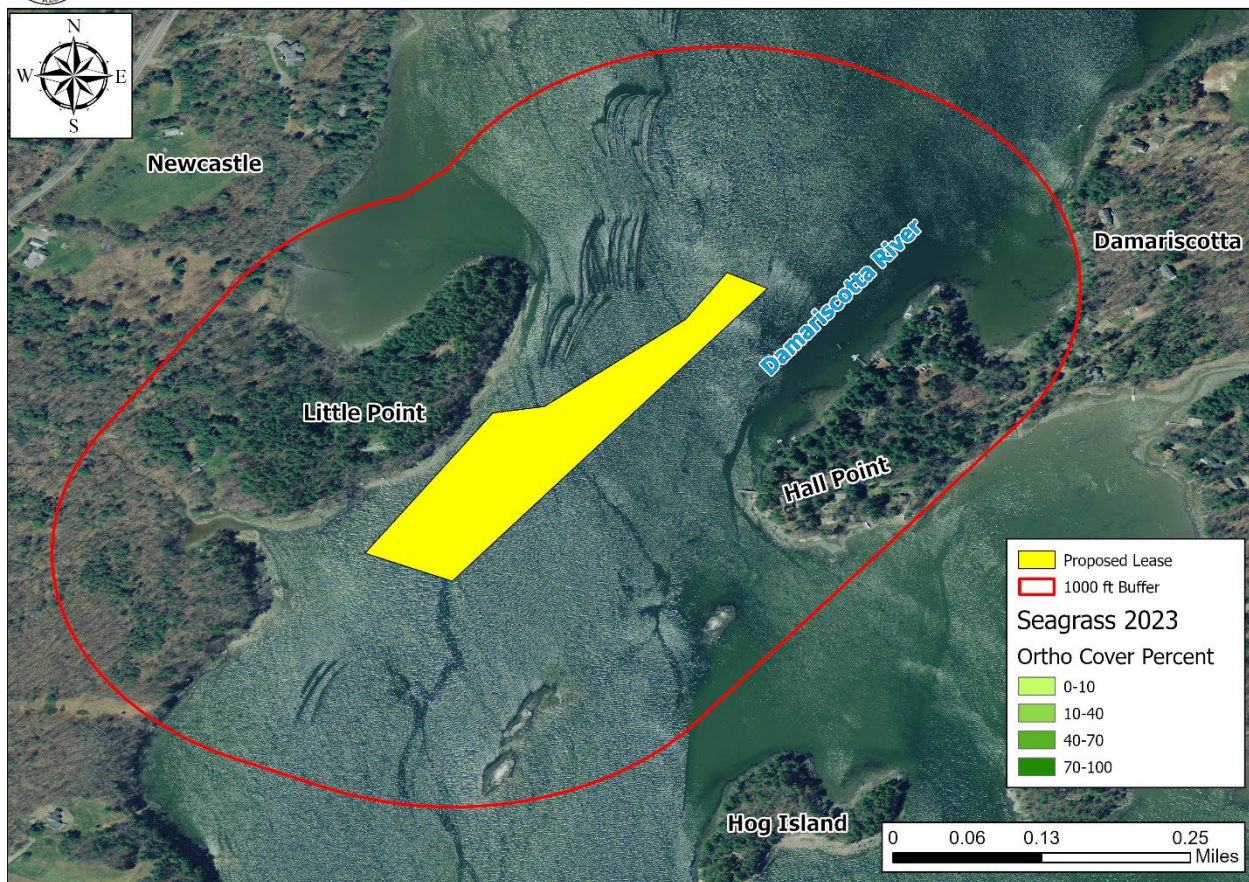


Figure 6. Mapped eelgrass (*Z. marina*) in the vicinity of the proposed lease area.

¹⁶ Data obtained from The Maine Office of GIS “GISVIEW.MEDEP.Seagrass2023”. Widgeon grass was observed only in a tributary to the Great Salt Bay, upstream of a culvert that likely restricts tidal flow. Eelgrass was the dominant vascular species in all other locations. This is the most current record of mapped eelgrass within the vicinity of the proposal.



Wildlife

During DMR's site visit on June 17, 2025, scientists observed moon jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*), great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), a hawk (Family: *Accipitridae*), common loon (*Gavia immer*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), and American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) in the general vicinity of the proposal.

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) has jurisdiction over inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the state. IFW also has the authority to conserve wildlife populations and their ecosystems through applicable state laws and rules. DMR provides IFW with notice and the opportunity to comment on all complete lease applications. In addition, the Site Report also includes IFW designated and mapped habitat types that are within 1,000 feet of the lease proposal, if applicable.

According to Geographic Information System (GIS) data maintained by IFW and available through the Maine Office of GIS (MEGIS), there is one mapped habitat type within 1,000 feet of the lease proposal. The proposal is within Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat (TWWH), which is a type of Significant Wildlife Habitat designated and regulated by IFW.¹⁷ Based on data maintained by IFW, approximately 1.15 acres of the proposal are within mapped TWWH (Figure 7).

Though bald eagles are no longer listed on Maine's Endangered and Threatened Species List, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) may also have jurisdiction over the management and conservation of the species based on applicable law and rule. Data collected by USFWS in 2023 by aerial nest survey shows there is a mapped bald eagle nesting site approximately 1,457 feet to the southeast of the proposal, as measured from corner C (Figure 7).

IFW was provided with the opportunity to comment on this proposal. On October 28, 2024, a Resource Biologist with IFW responded by email to a "Request for Agency Review and Comment" stating that minimal impacts to wildlife are anticipated for this project.¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/programs-resources/environmental-review/significant.html>

¹⁸ Email correspondence between IFW and DMR



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle/Damariscotta

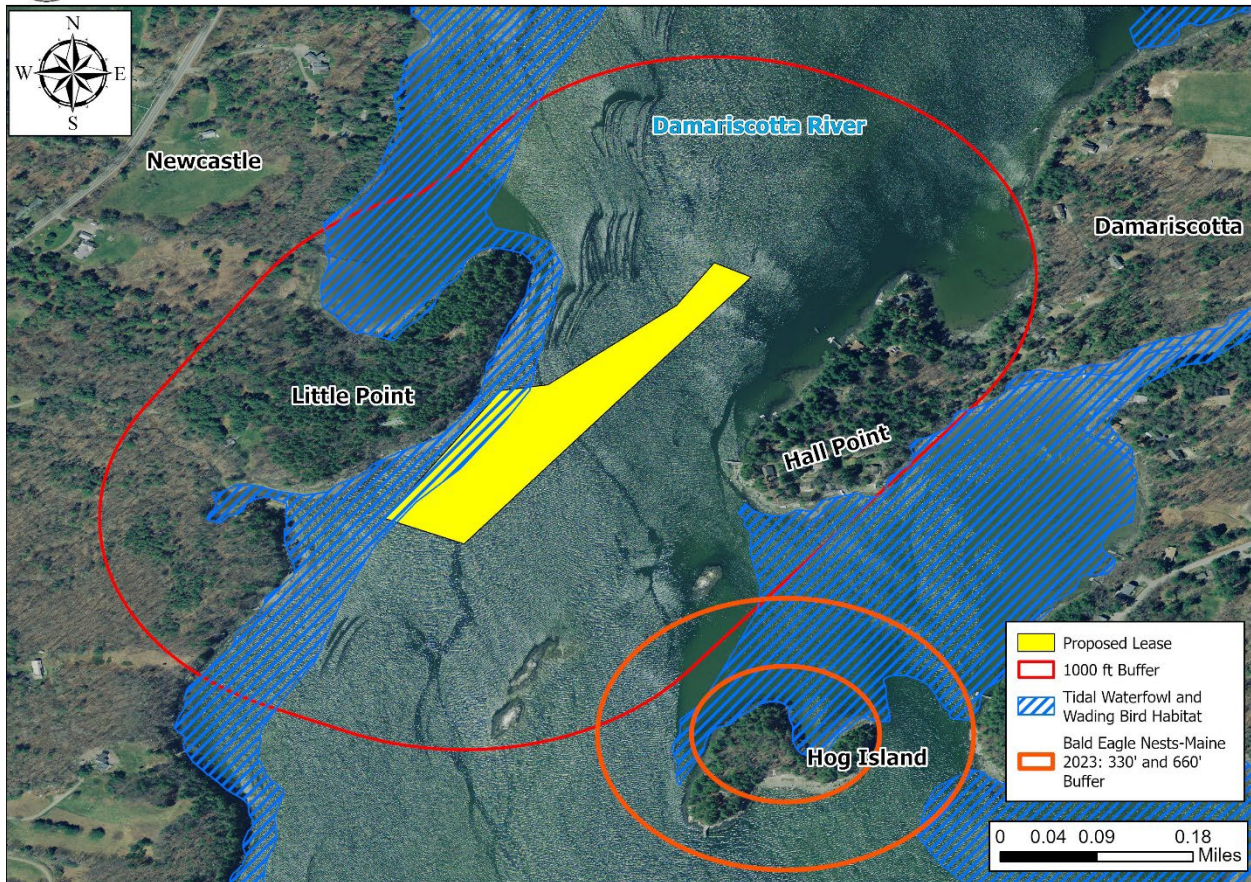


Figure 7. Mapped habitats in the vicinity of the proposed lease area. ¹⁹

¹⁹ Data obtained from USFWS "Bald_Eagle_Nests_-_Maine_2023" and IFW "EHRTERN", "EHPLVTRN", "GISVIEW.MEIFW.Twwh", "ShorebirdAreas", and "SNI".



(6) Interference with Public Facilities

The proposed lease is not within 1,000 feet of any beach, park, docking facility, or conserved lands owned by federal, state, or municipal governments (Figure 8).



Joel Spinney - East of Little Point, Newcastle

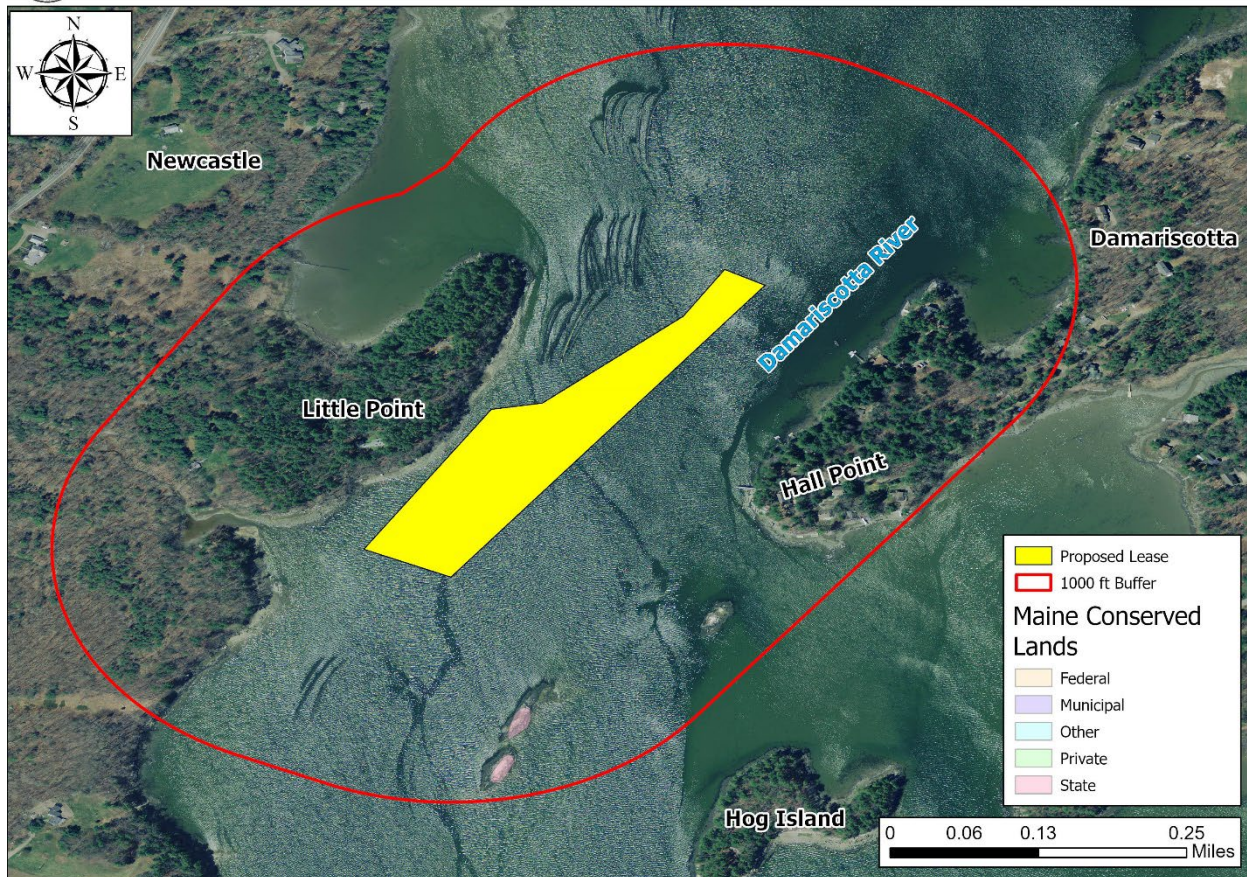


Figure 8. Public facilities near the proposed lease site.²⁰

(7) Growing Area Classification

The proposed lease is currently located within an area classified as Approved by the DMR Bureau of Public Health and Aquaculture.

²⁰ Data obtained from The Maine Office of GIS "GISVIEW.MECONSLANDS.Conserved_Lands"