

Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group Overview

The Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group (Working Group) is an initiative started in 2019 with a **mission** to collaboratively address pressing issues facing the wild-harvest shellfish community and to share expertise and best practices for management, conservation, research, and monitoring across towns and stakeholders in Casco Bay. The **goal** is to equip municipalities with the knowledge and experience to manage their wild intertidal shellfish resources in the changing Casco Bay ecosystem, through providing a forum for sharing information, resources, and tools. The **vision** is a healthy intertidal ecosystem that sustains shellfish resources and the harvesters that depend on these fisheries. Participants in the Working Group will be better prepared to help their communities safeguard this important fishery.



All members of the shellfish community in the Casco Bay region are welcome to participate, including harvesters, municipal committee members, wardens/marine resource officers, researchers and educators. The municipalities in the Casco Bay 'region' with shellfish ordinances include: Biddeford, Scarborough, Falmouth, Cumberland, Chebeague, Yarmouth, Freeport, Brunswick, Harpswell, West Bath, Phippsburg, Georgetown, Arrowsic, and Woolwich. We define the region to be inclusive of adjacent communities and those within the watershed.

The Working Group utilizes a stakeholder-driven process, where members identify the topics to be addressed at each of the meetings. There will be up to three Working Group meetings each year, with rotating locations throughout the region. There is a progression throughout the meetings from sharing current practices; then identifying shared issues (environmental, social, or economic) and management questions; to prioritizing a few key areas to focus on for technical assistance; and culminating in several collaborative activities and/or field demonstrations. Stipends are available to harvesters participating in these activities.

The Working Group distributes an electronic newsletter and maintains a website with meeting information, guidance documents, and other resources and announcements. Outreach and communication within the Casco Bay region, as well as with other coastal regions in Maine, is a priority throughout this initiative.

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