

# THOMASTON: ST. GEROGE RIVER RESILIENCE PROJECT



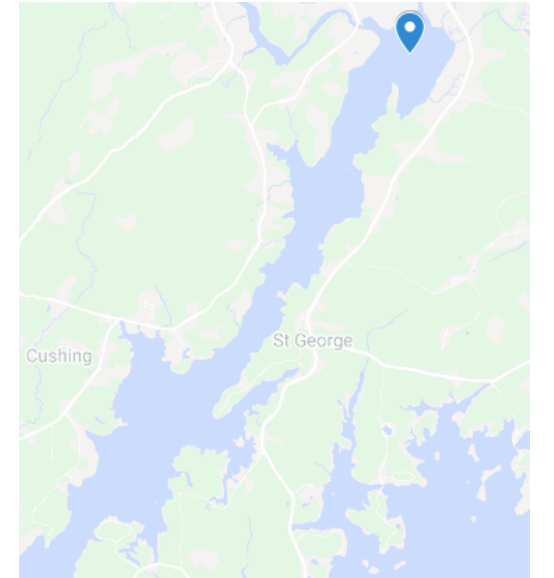
**Town**  
**Thomaston**



**Watershed**  
**St. George River**



**Project Type**  
**Water Quality**



## Background

The Georges River Shellfish Committee (GRSC) manages harvesting in the towns of St. George, South Thomaston, Thomaston, Warren, and Cushing. Many of the flats within the five-town region are closed due to pollution. The committee is working to identify the source of pollution through DNA testing, and reclassify restricted flats with data provided from a drifter bucket study.

In particular, GRSC is focused on an area near the mouth of the St. George River known as “the Bay,” which experienced heavy depuration digging and may affect shellfish populations downriver.



Thomaston harbor

## DNA Testing

GRSC received a grant for DNA testing to track the source of E. coli bacteria that is keeping the flats closed. In the first year, David Taylor collected twenty seven water samples and sent them for testing to the University of New Hampshire. A few of

the sites tested for human waste, and all of the samples tested positive for mammal pollution, indicating a significant amount of dog waste. The Shellfish Committee is conducting public outreach around proper removal of dog and cattle manure. The DNA testing has allowed Broad Cove to reopen for clamming, and GRSC hopes the DNA work can support the reopening of ‘the Bay’ in the future.



Gabby Hillyer launching a bucket drifter

## Drifter Study

To get a better picture of estuary dynamics, and how the wind and current move clam seed through the bay, University of Maine PhD student Gabby Hillyer brought bucket drifters to Thomaston. The drifters are equipped with GPS and released

into the river. Tracking their movement provides a picture of tidal circulation patterns. An Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) was also used to measure how fast the water moves across a water column. With the data gathered by the drifter buckets and ADCP, Gabby and UMaine professor Lauren Ross created models of the St. George River estuary, which may help inform management decisions.

## Takeaways

The GRSC manages a large area, and estimates that several more years of DNA testing will be needed to reopen pollution sites. The DNA testing has successfully reopened Broad Cove, and the drifter models are an exciting new way for the committee and harvesters to engage with the estuary.



A harvester builds his own bucket drifter

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