



Town of Cutler Public Access Project (Part I)

“We have been discussing the need to try to improve the boat launch site for several years especially since parking is so limited. There were many ideas that were brought up over that time, but no one really knew if anything could be done on the property since it is so small. Thanks to the funding assistance from NOAA and the Maine Coastal Program we have been able to really dig into the needs of the site, examine the constraints and come up with a plan of action for improving the functionality of the property.”

Teresa Bragg, Cutler Town Administrator



PROJECT DESCRIPTION (completed April 2013)

This grant provided funds to analyze the potential to expand existing public access facilities at Cutler Harbor. The study included a public outreach element to insure that the community’s input, concerns and ideas were part of the final outcome. This site is small, offers limited parking, and is in high demand throughout the year. It is used by commercial fishermen, recreational boaters, and a puffin and seabird nature cruise operation in the summer. In the winter, urchin divers use the site for access. Throughout the year parking is an issue and frequently spills onto Route 191. The proposed expansion includes adding floats and additional parking.

APPROACH

The feasibility analysis included several tasks: 1) form a project advisory committee 2) create an existing site plan 3) develop a concept plan for improvements 4) conduct public outreach and 5) draft a feasibility report.

RESULTS

An advisory committee comprised of representatives of the Board of Selectmen, the Harbor Committee, the Harbor Master, a representative from Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the public-at-large was formed. This committee reviewed the surveyed site plan of the property showing topography, property lines, existing parking areas, and other site features to develop a plan for possible improvements in circulation, parking, new floats, a retaining wall, and general site layout. Potential issues including areas of

COASTAL COMMUNITY GRANTS: Harbor and Water Access

erosion and interaction between users were identified and cost estimates for development of the concept plan were generated. Several advisory committee meetings were open to the public, and one community forum was held that was both educational and participatory in nature. A formal report included a brief written narrative addressing the pros and cons of project development, survey and topographic information, a concept plan, a summary of permitting needs and a brief implementation section with possible funding sources.

NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of this planning process, the Town has been awarded a Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) Grant from Maine Department of Transportation to assist in the construction of improved access, new floats, and other site improvements. The next steps are to develop engineering plans and complete permit applications for construction of the concept plan.

NEEDS

In order to fund construction and capitalize on potential future grant funding, the Town needs to budget accordingly for matching funds. In addition, maintenance for the site will require budgeting.

LESSONS LEARNED

Learned about the importance of the sand beach to the general public. Gained a better understanding of various users of boat launch and needs of those users. Gained a better understanding of the possible limits within the site itself due to size and funding.

APPLICABILITY FOR OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Other municipalities can utilize a similar approach to analyzing how small public landing areas can be improved. The combination of detailed survey data on the property and an understanding of the larger needs for waterfront access help to define the site constraints and the opportunities those sites offer to the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage coordination with other grant making agencies to help fund implementation of plans generated from these types of project.

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