

Resources for Preserving Commercial Fishing Access

Created by Maine Coastal Program for the Maine Department of Marine Resources Shellfish Advisory Council
December 2022 Update (First published: April 2022)

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Photo: Melissa Britsch

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Introduction

During the January 2022 Maine Department of Marine Resources Shellfish Advisory Council (ShAC) meeting, harvesters discussed current concerns about accessing intertidal mudflats in their towns and shared solutions and funding sources that have been helpful in the past.

Issues of concern to ShAC members present at the meeting included the loss of informal walk-in access as properties change hands; increased turnover in land ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic; crowding and parking shortages at municipal facilities; and safety concerns and increased costs related to longer transit times in small boats to harvest areas, especially in winter.

While commercial fishing “access” can include walk-in intertidal access, public boating facilities, the availability of mooring spaces, gear storage, boat maintenance, and commercial fishing licenses, among other things, this document primarily focuses on opportunities for shellfish harvesters at walk-in intertidal access points and public boating facilities.

Based on the discussion during the ShAC meeting, follow-up with its co-chairs, and outreach to other organizations involved in working waterfront access, Maine Coastal Program staff organized the concerns into five primary categories: 1) space, facilities, and use conflicts; 2) ensuring commercial access over time; 3) building and maintaining relationships; 4) tracking change; and 5) municipal capacity limitations. This document provides information about potential funding opportunities, examples of successful solutions, and information about potential governmental, academic, and non-profit partners. A list of previous studies and Maine waterfront access inventories is also included.

We hope that this document is useful for municipal elected officials and volunteer committees, harvesters, landowners, and others trying to find ways to maintain and increase coastal access in Maine. MCP acknowledges that this document is not exhaustive. Please let us know of additional information and help us improve this document by providing comments about ways to make it more useful.

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Recommended citation: Britsch, M. 2022. *Resources for Preserving Commercial Fishing Access*. Maine Coastal Program, Maine Department of Marine Resources.

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This report was prepared by the Maine Coastal Program with CZM funding to the Maine Department of Marine Resources for grant year 2022 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.



Issue 1: Addressing space, facilities and use conflicts

Including a shortage of parking spaces, limits on parking duration, crowding and seasonal use conflicts at public access locations, and a lack of facilities dedicated to commercial fishing activities like fuel, wharves, piers, boat launches, gear storage, maintenance, and mooring access.

Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a municipal committee to examine access* issues or task a shellfish/harbor committee, harbormaster, or a subcommittee of a comprehensive planning committee to do so • Write a grant for your town to conduct inventories of access points and facilities and to evaluate current and projected needs • Develop goals for facility maintenance, improvement, and expansion, and/or acquisition and development of new facilities • Ensure that your access plan is formalized/ adopted at the town level and needed investments are reflected in capital improvements plans • Consider adding your access plan and facility goals to existing programs and funding sources • Seek funds for feasibility and design work and cost estimates • Develop and use best management practices for sharing facilities and maintaining good landowner relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMR: Shore and Harbor Grants • DACF: Coastal Communities Grant • Municipal: Community Comprehensive Planning Efforts • Maine Coast Heritage Trust and DACF: Datasets for waterfront access • Maine Island Trail Association, Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors 	<p>Identify access sites with harvesters and take steps to make them permanent (Example: Gouldsboro project)</p> <p>Count harvester participation on committees towards conservation hours or license fees</p> <p>Inventory access points and other locations and rank protection priority (Example: Machiasport Text (pg. 5-9), Map, and Map)</p> <p>DACF conserved lands data: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/assistance/conslands.htm</p> <p>Example Best Management Practice: Identify preferred launch areas for kayaker use to ease conflicts with commercial use and share information at launch sites, on town website, and with local outfitters and land trusts</p>

**Access involves many activities, including walk-in intertidal access, public boat launches, physical access to moorings as well as availability of mooring spaces, gear storage, boat maintenance, and licenses, among other things. While all forms of access are important and deserve attention, this document focuses primarily on opportunities for shellfish harvesters at walk-in intertidal access and public boat launches. Some of the resources mentioned here could also be applied to other access issues.*

Issue 1 Continued		
Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funds for facility construction • Explore protecting town-owned access properties through LMF’s Working Waterfront Access Protection Program or Water Access Program (placing working waterfront covenant or easement on property) and use funds to construct needed facilities and/or purchase adjoining land for facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOT: Small Harbor Improvement Grants • DACF: Submerged Lands Fund • DACF: Boating Facilities Program • Municipal: Bond issue • Land for Maine’s Future Program: Working Waterfront Access Protection Program or Water Access Program 	<p>Example: Beals Town Landing. The town protected their landing through the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program and used the funds to purchase adjacent land and expand their parking lot</p>

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Issue 2: Ensuring commercial access over time

Commercial access can be on privately-owned properties and may be granted through a verbal agreement. These access rights are easily changed and are especially vulnerable when properties are sold. Other properties may be set aside for public use but do not have formal protection like an easement or waterfront covenant. Creating new access points is expensive and challenging, and it is important to ensure that existing access points are not lost so future generations can access the coast.

Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent protection via ownership of sites by the town, state or federal government, land trust, harvester co-op, etc. • As noted above, LMF will establish covenants or easements on land already owned by towns, generating funds for access improvements • Landowner can develop a formal and recorded access easement over their property • Land trusts or other entities can purchase a conservation easement on private property • Landowner voluntarily agrees to allow access • Town research and identification of Rights-of-Way for public use • Development of a single entity devoted to coastal access and maintaining working waterfronts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land for Maine’s Future Program: Working Waterfront Access Protection Program or Water Access Program • Maine Coast Heritage Trust and other local/regional land trusts • Maine Current Land Use Taxation Program • Landowner outreach • DMR: Shore and Harbor Grants • Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group: Preserving Access to the Intertidal: A guide for coastal stakeholders and municipalities 	<p>MCHT land conservation guide: This guide outlines land conservation options for landowners, including easements, donations, and sales.</p> <p>Working Waterfront Access Protection Program: The Spruce Head Fisherman’s Co-op purchased their wharf using funds from the LMF program and also was able to purchase a nearby property to expand their operations.</p> <p>Land purchases in collaboration with land trusts and diverse funding sources: The purchase of Woodward Point in Brunswick resulted in the creation of a public preserve and continued shoreline access for shellfish harvesters.</p> <p>Contact Regional Planning Organizations (many have existing Brownfields Assessment funds/programs) and nominate site for Phase I ESA</p> <p>Right-of-Way rediscovery example: Deer Isle was funded by the DMR Shore and Harbor Planning grant for deed research and legal analysis to establish if the Town had legal rights-of-way in three contested locations.</p>

Issue 3: Building, maintaining and refreshing relationships among industry and municipalities, landowners, the public and others

Highlighting the importance of the commercial fishing industry, understanding future threats, and supporting growth over time will be critical, and it is especially important that municipalities, landowners, and the public are aware of the industry in their local area and the challenges marine-based industries are facing.

Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with local land trusts, library staff, or local paper to work on letters to the editor and articles that promote and celebrate the industry • Use social media to promote the industry • Send letters to coastal residents, and outreach with realtors, public education campaign • Landowner and harvester appreciation day (host an event, offer clam chowder, open and honest discussions with harvesters and homeowners) • Update and distribute Washington County Council of Governments/Maine Sea Grant “Sights and Sounds of the Waterfront brochure,” and work with real estate agents, property management businesses (rentals), and local hotels to share with visitors and prospective coastal home buyers • Meet with local realtors and discuss the location of working access points in town and encourage them to be more explicit regarding the sights and sounds associated with being near a commercial fishing property • Add policies to local harbor and comprehensive plans to encourage celebration/gratitude for landowners who grant access, whether informal or formal (easements); also add policies to encourage purchase of easements and town financial set-asides in Capital Improvement Plans 	<p>Outreach brochures (Sea Grant and Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association updating as of April 2022):</p> <p>https://seagrants.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2004-moosabec.pdf</p> <p>https://seagrants.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2005-harpswell.pdf</p>	<p>Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association is working with the Cundy’s Harbor Library, Harpswell Anchor, Holbrook’s Foundation, and others to offer a panel series that includes fishing and waterfront topics. They also write monthly articles in the local paper.</p>

Issue 4: Monitoring change

Understanding if and how much access opportunities have changed on the coast will be important for identifying areas with the highest need and potential solutions. Tracking changes in the amount of access, the demographic makeup of coastal communities, and conflicts related to access issues will help clarify what is needed in a community.

Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track loss and gain of access points • Track implementation of harbor plans, comprehensive plans, and capital investment plans • Track conflict and complaints pertaining to the working waterfront • Track spending on shoreline access and related issues • Track economic significance of fisheries harvests and licenses to local/regional income • Track user satisfaction at public facilities • Track land use patterns, property sales trends, and subdivision activity • Track real estate broker perceptions, trends, use of informational materials (like Moosabec and Harpswell brochures), and potential buyer responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative studies among harvesters, non-profits, and others to understand changes in access over time • Work with town offices to track locations of tax bills • Town inventories of use, property sales, planning, and implementation • University researchers • Downeast Institute • Downeast Fisheries Partnership 	<p>Brunswick is tracking changes in waterfront ownership, including the number of waterfront tax bills being sent out of the state.</p> <p>Maine Coast Fishermen's Association and Tidal Bay Consulting building a list of common metrics and indicators used for inventories of working waterfronts and marine resources. Working Waterfront Maine Coast Fishermen's Association</p>

Issue 5: Addressing municipal capacity

For many reasons, some municipalities lack the technical capacity to apply to grants, collect data, and identify opportunities to address coastal access problems. Coastal access and management issues are often complex and partnerships among towns, regional councils, non-profits, academic groups, tribes, and governmental agencies can be essential.

Potential Approaches	Resources	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how other organizations can help and seek them out • These organizations and others may offer technical assistance (including grant writing and project management) and financial support to towns at no or nominal costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional shellfish committees • Other nearby municipalities • State agencies • Regional Planning Organizations • Non-profits (e.g. Island Institute, Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, Manomet, Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries, Downeast Institute, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Gulf of Maine Research Institute) • University groups (e.g. Maine Shellfish Learning Network, Maine Sea Grant,) • AmeriCorps and the Maine Climate Corps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for expertise and support from town committee members • Maine Municipal Association • Consider fellows from AmeriCorps or Maine ClimateCorps programs • Many universities have school-funded internship and work-study programs 	<p>Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, Island Institute, and Maine Coastal Program have published reports on the status of working waterfronts in Maine</p> <p>Most recent inventories: https://www.maine coastfishermen.org/working-waterfront https://www.islandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WWF-Report_web.pdf</p> <p><i>*See below for a list of working waterfront studies starting in 1985</i></p>

Grant writing resources

Regional Planning Organizations

Regional Planning Organizations are supported by Maine Coastal Program and Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry's Municipal Planning Assistance Program. These organizations cover different regions of the state and provide general planning assistance to municipalities. https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/technical/regional_council.shtml

- **Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC):** Supports coastal communities in York and southern Cumberland Counties. <https://www.smrpc.org/>
- **Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG):** Supports coastal communities in Cumberland and northern York Counties. <https://www.gpcog.org/>
- **Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG):** Supports coastal communities in Sagadahoc, Lincoln, and Knox Counties, as well as Harpswell and Brunswick in Cumberland County and Northport, Lincolnville, Searsmont, and Belmont in Waldo County. <https://www.mceddme.org/>
- **Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC):** Supports coastal communities in Lincoln County. <http://lcrpc.org/>
- **Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC):** Supports coastal communities in Hancock County. <https://www.hcpcme.org/>
- **Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC):** Supports economic and community development in Washington County. <https://sunrisecounty.org/>
- Any town not covered by a regional planning organization is supported by the Maine Land Use Planning Commission

Other Organizations

- [AmeriCorps](#)
- [Downeast Fisheries Partnership](#)
- [Downeast Institute](#)
- [Gulf of Maine Research Institute](#)
- [Island Institute](#)
- [Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries](#)

- [Maine Climate Corps](#)
- [Maine Coast Fishermen's Association](#)
- [Maine Coast Heritage Trust](#)
- [Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future](#)
- [Maine Municipal Association](#)
- [Manomet](#)
- University researchers and affiliated partners
 - [Maine Sea Grant](#)
 - [Maine Shellfish Learning Network](#)

Other resources

- **Purdue Online Writing Lab (aka Purdue OWL):** This website has writing information, including grant writing tips. [Grant Writing // Purdue Writing Lab](#)
- **Tip:** Don't be afraid to reach out to the funding organization to talk about ideas and ask questions.

List of published working waterfront inventories

This list shows previous efforts to document the status of coastal access in Maine. Many of these studies are out-of-date but the material may be useful for understanding prior conditions and provide ideas for repeatable studies. These studies are not specific to walk-in or public boat access, but several discuss these issues.

Title	Year	Authors	Link if applicable
Maine Port Development Study: Port Facility Inventory and Evaluation	1985	MeDOT	Accessible through the Maine State Library
The Last 25 Miles	1989	Maine State Planning Office and Maine Coastal Program	
The Right Tack: Charting your Harbor's Future	1995	Hancock County Planning Commission for the Maine State Planning Office and Maine Coastal Program	https://maineharbormasters.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CZIC-tc224-m2-r54-1995.pdf
The Waterfront Construction Handbook: Guidelines for the Design and Construction of Waterfront Facilities	1997	Maine Coastal Program and Maine Department of Economic and Community Development	Accessible through the Maine State Library
Maine Port Facilities Inventory and Analysis	1998	Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and Eastern Maine Development Corporation	

Title	Year	Authors	Link if applicable
Coastal Water Access Priority Areas for Boating and Fishing	2000	Maine State Planning Office and Maine Coastal Program	Accessible through the Maine State Library
Preserving Commercial Access: A Study of Working Waterfronts in 25 Maine Communities	2002	Coastal Enterprises, Inc. for Maine State Planning Office and Maine Coastal Program	Preserving Commercial Access - A Study of Working Waterfronts in 25 Maine Communities.pdf
Paths and Piers: A Study of Commercial Fishing Access in Downeast Maine Coastal Communities	2003	Sunrise County Economic Council	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2006-maine-waterfront-access-scec-paths-and-piers.pdf
Tracking Commercial Fishing Access: A Survey of Harbormasters in 25 Maine Coastal Communities	2004	Coastal Enterprises, Inc. for Maine State Planning Office and Maine Coastal Program	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2006-maine-waterfront-access-cei-mcp-tracking-commercial-fishing-access.pdf
The Contribution of Working Waterfronts to the Maine Economy	2004	Colgan, C. S. for Maine's Working Waterfront Coalition	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2006-maine-waterfront-access-colgan-contribution-working-waterfronts.pdf
Saving Working Waterfronts: Mapping the Maine Coast's Economic Future	2005	Island Institute	

Title	Year	Authors	Link if applicable
Access to the Waterfront: Issues and Solutions Across the Nation	2007	Maine Sea Grant	https://caseagrant.ucsd.edu/sites/default/files/Waterfront_Access_ME_SG.pdf
Mapping Maine's Working Waterfront: A Statewide Inventory by the Island Institute	2007	Island Institute	
The Last 20 Miles: Mapping Maine's Working Waterfront	2008	Island Institute	https://www.islandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TheLast20Miles_web.pdf
Public Shoreline Access in Maine: A Citizen's Guide to Ocean and Coastal Law	2016	Maine Sea Grant and Wells Reserve	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/03/2016-public-shoreline-access-in-maine-standard.pdf
The State of Maine's Working Waterfront	2020	Maine Coast Fishermen's Association	https://www.maineoastfishermen.org/working-waterfront
The Critical Nature of Maine's Working Waterfronts and Access to the Shore	2021	Island Institute	https://www.islandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WWF-Report_web.pdf

Website Links

Below are links to the websites referenced in the text.

Text in document	URL
Shore and Harbor Grants	https://www.maine.gov/dmr/programs/maine-coastal-program/grants-and-rfps/shore-and-harbor-planning-grants
Coastal Communities Grant	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/financial_assistance.shtml
Community Comprehensive Planning Efforts	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/comp_plans/index.shtml
Maine Coast Heritage Trust	https://www.mcht.org/
Maine Island Trail Association	https://mita.org/
Maine Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors	http://maskgi.org/
Gouldsboro project	https://gouldsboroshore.me/
Machiasport Text (pg. 5-9),	http://wccog.net/assets/files/machiasport/Harbor%20Plan%20Docs/Map%204%20-%20Machiasport%20Marine%20Resources.pdf
Machiasport first map	http://wccog.net/assets/files/machiasport/Harbor%20Plan%20Docs/Map%202%20-%20Machiasport%20Cultural%20Resources.pdf
Machiasport second map	http://wccog.net/assets/files/machiasport/Harbor%20Plan%20Docs/B%20-%20CULTURAL%20RESOURCES%20Machiasport.pdf
Conserved lands data	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/assistance/conslands.htm
Shore and Harbor Improvement Grants	https://www.maine.gov/mdot/pga/#:~:text=Small%20Harbor%20Improvement%20Program%20%28SHIP%29%20Boating%20Infrastructure%20Grant,benefit%2026%20feet%20or%20larger%20recreational%20transient%20boats
Submerged Lands Fund	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/about/submerged_lands.shtml
Boating facilities program	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/about/boating_facilities_program/index.shtml
Working Waterfront Access Protection Program or Water Access Program	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/applying.shtml
Beals Town Landing	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/docs/completedlmfprojects/wwf-lmf-projects-june2022.pdf

Text in document	URL
Maine Current Land Use Taxation Program	https://www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/tax-relief-credits-programs/property-tax-relief-programs/land-use-programs#:~:text=Office%20of%20Tax%20Policy%20Current%20Land%20Use%20Programs,its%20current%20use%2C%20rather%20than%20at%20market%20value.
MCHT land conservation guide	https://www.mcht.org/publication/conservation-options-a-guide-for-maine-landowners/
Spruce Head Fisherman’s Co-op	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/webmap_files/513.pdf
Woodward Point in Brunswick	https://www.mcht.org/story/harvesters-step-up-for-conservation/
Realtor outreach brochures	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2004-moosabec.pdf ; https://seagrant.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/467/2019/05/2005-harpswell.pdf
Island Institute	https://www.islandinstitute.org/
Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association	https://www.maineoastfishermen.org/
Downeast Fisheries Partnership	https://downeastfisheries.org/
Manomet	https://www.manomet.org/work/where-we-work/
Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries	https://coastalfisheries.org/
Downeast Institute	https://downeastinstitute.org/
Maine Coast Heritage Trust	https://www.mcht.org/
Gulf of Maine Research Institute	https://www.gmri.org/
Maine Shellfish Learning Network	https://umaine.edu/shellfish-restoration/
Maine Sea Grant	https://seagrant.umaine.edu/
Maine Climate Corps	http://www.volunteermaine.gov/serve-in-maine/climate-corps
Maine Municipal Association	https://memun.org/
Maine Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future	https://www.maine.gov/future/home
Regional Planning Organizations	https://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/technical/regional_council.shtml

Text in document	URL
Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC)	https://www.smrpc.org/
Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG)	https://www.gpcog.org/
Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG)	https://www.mceddme.org/
Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC)	http://lcrpc.org/
Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC)	https://www.hcpcme.org/
Sunrise County Economic Council	https://sunrisecounty.org/
Purdue Online Writing Lab	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/grant_writing/index.html