## How the *Casco Bay Plan 2016-2021* Differs from the Previous Plan

The original *Casco Bay Plan* (first released in 1996 and revised in 2006) identified five priority goals governing the Partnership's work: (1) conserve habitats; (2) minimize pathogens, nutrients and sediments from stormwater and combined sewer overflows; (3) protect and open shellfish beds and swimming areas; (4) reduce toxic pollution; and (5) promote responsible stewardship. Pages 12-17 of the *Casco Bay Plan 2016-2021* summary document highlight some of the projects advancing these goals that CBEP accomplished or supported during its first two decades.

The current Plan—focused on 2016-2021—incorporates most of those long-standing priorities while addressing new regional challenges. Two previous priorities—reducing toxics and opening swim beaches and clam flats—remain important for the Bay's long-term health, but have declined in prominence relative to other issues.

Today, fewer persistent toxics (such as heavy metals, PCBs, and pesticide residues) enter the Bay than did decades ago—thanks to strengthened environmental laws, and technological and economic changes. The concerns now arise from the ongoing release of a complex mix of ubiquitous chemicals affecting the Bay and tainting marine food webs-- which include compounds like Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), flame retardants and anti-stick coatings; and medications that pass through wastewater treatment plants. More research on the combined effects of these chemicals is needed, but little of that can be done effectively in a single watershed. Therefore, this *Casco Bay Plan* addresses toxic chemicals in the context of other strategies such as reducing stormwater impacts and monitoring Casco Bay's health.

The current *Casco Bay Plan* does not emphasize pathogen exposure in swimming and eating shellfish, due in part to recent measures reducing those health risks. For example, human waste discharge from recreational boats is now illegal throughout Casco Bay and vessel pumpout services are widely available. Coastal towns have identified and are working to address many sources of pathogen pollution (such as failing septic systems), and septic tank installers and Code Enforcement Officers receive better training. Within the shellfish industry, concerns about harvesting closures due to bacterial contamination have largely been eclipsed by threats such as invasive predators and ocean acidification. While pathogen pollution in Casco Bay remains an issue to watch, it will receive less attention from the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership in the next five years.