

Casco Bay Currents, an email newsletter of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

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Summer 2017

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Welcome,

to the Summer 2017 edition of *Casco Bay Currents*, the newsletter for the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP).

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newsletters in the past. If you wish to unsubscribe, please click the link at the bottom of the page.

Message from the Director



It's hard to believe we are already midway through summer. This year began with lots of uncertainty. President Trump's proposed budgets for both this year and next eliminated funding for the National Estuary Program entirely. Fortunately, bipartisan support in Congress ensured continued funding for the current year, and signs are positive for next year as well. Several other federal programs that are important for protecting the health of Maine's coast and our coastal economy faced similar uncertainty.

A healthy Casco Bay is increasingly important. A study that we will release this fall reveals that the ocean economy of the Casco Bay region accounts for some \$1.23 billion in economic activity and more than 24,000 jobs, or more than 7% of all economic activity in the region. The Bay underpins a high quality of life, which is itself an engine for the regional economy. Its amenities attract people to the region, helping drive a growing and dynamic economy.

CBEP and our partners have been busy this summer working to improve understanding of the Bay. CBEP and at least fourteen other organizations (and many citizen scientists) have been collecting data on conditions in the Bay: water quality in the Bay's tributaries; conditions in our salt marshes; ocean acidification; the health of eelgrass beds; abundance of invasive species; and the size of alewife populations. There has been a particular focus this summer on monitoring nutrients at the mouth of the Presumpscot River and at Portland's East End, to

understand nutrients entering the Bay, and what happens once they get there. Results will help us identify ways to protect water quality in years to come.

-Curtis C. Bohlen, Director

Partner Profile: Casco Bay Stormwater Coordinators

Polluted stormwater is one of the largest remaining sources of pollution for the nation's waters, including Casco Bay. Cities and towns are faced with increased requirements, under the federal Clean Water Act, to protect and restore water quality in our streams, rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

Every five years, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) issues a statewide General Permit to all communities designated as small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s). The MS4 designation is based on the decennial U.S. census data for "urbanized areas." A number of Casco Bay communities fall under this designation, which requires them all to implement "minimum control measures" to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff.

The Casco Bay region's largest municipalities, Portland and South Portland, both have stormwater coordinators on staff designated to manage the complexities of this issue. Other communities in the region have sustainability coordinators or public works staff that address stormwater issues in the scope of their responsibilities.



Doug Roncarati has been the **City of Portland's Stormwater Program Coordinator** since the position's inception in 2008. Prior to that, he was staff in the Engineering Division of Public Works.

A typical day for Doug is coordinating implementation of the City's Stormwater

Program Management Plan, including tracking stormwater and water quality regulations, supporting water resource policy-making, assisting with spill response and illicit discharge investigations, coordinating the municipal green infrastructure maintenance and inspection program, community education, and much more.

Doug finds the biggest challenge for his position is raising awareness of the need for municipal, commercial and public stormwater pollution prevention and translating awareness into action in the form of consistent practices. Another big challenge is keeping up with the ever-changing regulatory environment.

In response to increasing state and federal regulations, the **City of South Portland** hired **Fred Dillon** as the first **Stormwater Program Coordinator** in the summer of 2009. His primary responsibilities include maintaining compliance with the MS4 permit and overseeing the City's Urban Impaired Stream program, which involves developing and implementing watershed management plans for those streams.



Nearly all of Fred's career has been devoted to protecting water resources in various capacities, beginning with the Falmouth Wastewater Department for over 15 years, then for Maine Sea Grant on a NOAA-funded project, and finally, six years as a project manager at FB Environmental on

watershed restoration projects.

Fred hopes to continue working with project partners, including CBEP, to address one of the biggest challenges associated with polluted stormwater runoff: encouraging individuals and groups to behave more sustainably. He was closely involved in writing the City's recently enacted Pesticides Use Ordinance and is currently working with the City's Sustainability Coordinator on an Education and Outreach Plan to implement the ordinance.

Photos

Top: Doug Roncarati planting with the Dole Brook Restoration Project

Bottom: Fred Dillon at the 2016 Southern Maine Children's Water Festival



Casco Bay Climate Change Vulnerability Report

Long-term data on conditions over the past century reveal clear trends in Casco Bay's climate, and these trends are expected to continue far into the future. With climate change increasingly affecting the Casco Bay ecosystem and people who live and work around the Bay, CBEP carried out a vulnerability assessment to identify the most important climate-related risks, and the most effective ways for CBEP and local communities to respond to the changes.

The Casco Bay Climate Change Vulnerability Report contains sections on climate trends in the Casco Bay region, management of climate risks, and a climate adaptation resource guide for Casco Bay communities. The report, as well as individual sections and a fact sheet, are available [here](#) on the CBEP website.

Image: September 2015 flooding; Portland Press Herald

Around the Bay with CBEP...



The "**Jewell Island Team**" of **Brunswick Junior High School**, a 2017 **Community Grant** recipient, engaged in a community-based, expeditionary learning unit to help students understand the fragility of Casco Bay and their duty to care for it. This is the sixth year that the team has

been running this program.

Students worked with CBEP staff at Thomas Bay Estuary to understand the function of an estuary and record observations. CBEP worked with the Town of Brunswick and other partners at this same site in 2011 to replace an undersized culvert that was restricting tidal flow to the marsh, and has been monitoring the marsh since project completion.

The Jewell Team, as part of their unit this year, also made trips to Paul's Marina and Mere Point in Brunswick, Peaks Island, Bigelow Labs and the Maine State Aquarium, and heard a presentation by Brunswick's Marine Warden.

The students developed three focus questions to guide their research, maintained a project notebook throughout the project where they



recorded notes and observations, and created final products that were showcased for the community at Curtis Memorial Library.



On July 30, the first-ever [Chebeague Island Aquaculture Festival](#) took place. Chebeague Island Community Association volunteers Carol White and Julia Maine, a dynamic mother-daughter duo, organized this one-day event, which was funded through a [CBEP](#)

[Community Grant.](#)

The goal of the event was to educate community members and others about the aquaculture farms in the community, as well as to raise awareness about the importance of water quality to these operations. Year-round residents, summer residents, and visitors from around the Casco Bay region and beyond participated in boat tours of offshore aquaculture sites, heard presentations and water quality demonstrations, and finished the day with samples of mussels, oysters, sea vegetables, and other local goodies.



For more information, check out the [festival website](#).

Why are Estuaries Important?

- ***Economic value:*** The ocean economy of Casco Bay accounted for an estimated \$1.23 billion dollars of direct economic activity in 2016 (7.2 percent of the regional economy and 2.3 percent of Maine's economy).
- ***Habitat value:*** Estuaries provide critical habitat for species valued for their commercial, recreational, and cultural significance.
- **Environmental protection:** Estuarine habitat, especially salt marshes, protect against coastal erosion, reduce flooding, and protect water quality by filtering runoff.
- ***Quality of life:*** Casco Bay holds inestimable cultural, recreational, aesthetic and spiritual importance for those who live and visit here.



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