



# Volunteers Donate More than 17,000 Hours to Stewardship of Casco Bay

Organizations Engage Volunteers in Wide Range of Roles

## WHY IT MATTERS

Volunteers for nonprofit and state government environmental organizations engage in important work. Their efforts contribute to the health and resilience of their communities. They may also develop personal connections with the Bay's ecosystem and become more deeply involved in the Bay's protection and restoration. The number of hours donated by volunteers for environmental stewardship is one measure of how connected people are to Casco Bay and how committed they are to protecting it.

## STATUS & TRENDS

CBEP in 2020 canvassed 26 nonprofit and state government environmental organizations active in Casco Bay and its watershed about volunteer stewardship and heard back from 13 organizations, 9 of which were land trusts.



Land trusts in the Casco Bay region rely heavily on volunteers. This volunteer for the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust is collecting water in Mill Brook to be analyzed for E. coli. (Photo: PRLT)

Volunteers donated 17,369 hours worth an estimated \$441,694 to 13 organizations in 2019.

Most volunteers are 65 or older, but some programs attract more youth and young adult volunteers.



Volunteers from Idexx help Maine Island Trail Association dismantle a derelict float on Little Chebeague Island. The lumber was repurposed to build a boardwalk on the island. (Photo: Chris Wall)



## Types of Volunteer Opportunities

Land Stewardship	11
One-Time Events	10
Education & Outreach	7
Office Work	6
Citizen Science	5
Other	4

## Number of Organizations

The most common volunteer roles according to 13 nonprofit and state government environmental organizations that provided data to CBEP.

## SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

- CBEP's canvassing of nonprofit and state government environmental organizations asked respondents to describe successes and challenges related to engaging volunteers in stewardship. The following quotations are representative of the range of responses:

"We've learned that on the whole, working with volunteers does not save us time or money. However, it's an extremely rewarding and important way of engaging our communities with land conservation."

"Couldn't live without them."

- Several organizations cited long-term retention of volunteers and multi-year engagement as their greatest volunteer program successes.
- Leading nature walks, monitoring water quality, and participating in citizen science projects provide unique opportunities for volunteers. Popular public events can also be built around these topics.



Volunteers participate in a Portland Trails work day on the Stroudwater River Trail. (Photo: Garrick Hoffman)

Volunteer recruitment generally is not a challenge, but staff capacity to execute projects and manage volunteers is.



A member of Phippsburg Conservation Commission recording water quality data. (Photos: CBEP)

## CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS: KEY PARTNERS FOR CASCO BAY

Conservation commissions are municipal advisory boards established by towns and cities through their legislative bodies such as town meetings or municipal councils. Members of conservation commissions are volunteers.

According to the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions, the most active commissions educate community members about local environmental issues; advise elected officials regarding environmental policies and practices; and organize and implement initiatives that address community environmental concerns. They often work in concert with local land trusts and nonprofits.

Commissions in the Casco Bay watershed are engaged in sea level rise monitoring, trail improvement, comprehensive plan guidance, pollution best management practices and education, and many other projects.



Conservation Commission members reading site plans in a CBEP Coastal Academy workshop.