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## Casco Bay Currents Winter 2024

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Mon, Dec 18, 2023 at 9:35 AM

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



## Winter 2024

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## Welcome,

**to the Winter 2024 edition of *Casco Bay Currents*, the newsletter for Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP).**

You are receiving this quarterly email newsletter because you signed up for our newsletters in the past. If you wish to unsubscribe, please click the link at the bottom of the newsletter.

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## Casco Bay Eelgrass Recovery Collaborative

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) plays many vital roles in the Casco Bay ecosystem. Its beds serve as nursery habitat for young fish, while providing food for fish, shellfish, and migratory birds. Eelgrass helps to remove sediments and excess nutrients from the water, and its roots stabilize sediments.



Over the last 15 years, acreage of eelgrass beds in Casco Bay – the only part of the Maine coast with robust data on the prevalence of eelgrass—has shown significant declines. In 2022, Casco Bay supported just under 2,300 acres of eelgrass, down from a total of about 8,200 in 2001, for a 72% decline in area in a period of 22 years.

Many threats may be contributing to eelgrass loss, ranging from the site-specific (scour from mooring chains on traditional moorings) to global (warming ocean waters). Warming waters, poor water quality, and damage caused by invasive European green crabs are thought to be among the most important factors driving recent declines.

Fortunately, there is a team of experts and volunteers that have received funding to carry out conservation and restoration efforts. A collaborative project between CBEP, Friends of Casco Bay, Manomet, and Team Zostera (an Initiative of the Collaborative for Bioregional Action Learning and Transformation or COBALT) is aimed at protecting and restoring eelgrass in Casco Bay.

Initial project goals are to better understand stressors leading to eelgrass loss through robust data collection and to accelerate the use of eelgrass seed to enhance or restore eelgrass beds.

Read more about this project [here](#).





*Photos: Top: Team Zostera Fellows, Hailey Rizzo (left) and Sydney Hay (right) collecting data on July 12, 2023. Credit: Glenn Page.*

*Bottom: Ethan Daniels/Shutterstock*

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## Winter 2024 CBEP Grant Opportunities



*Photo courtesy of Lakes Environmental Association*

CBEP is accepting applications for the 2024 **Casco Bay Community Grants Program**.

CBEP encourages new partnerships and innovative projects that engage communities with Casco Bay and its watershed. Successful proposals will incorporate at least one of the elements from the **Casco Bay Plan**. Proposals are welcome from educators, land trusts and other non-profit organizations, especially in partnership with civic groups, municipal committees, churches, clubs, school groups and neighborhood associations.

[Here](#) is the Request for Proposals. [Here](#) is a fillable application form if you prefer that format. If you have trouble downloading documents and would like the package emailed or



*Photo courtesy of Presumpscot Regional Land Trust*

CBEP is accepting applications for the Fall 2024 **Habitat Protection Fund**.

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership requests proposals for grant-funding of projects that support the permanent protection of targeted habitats in the Casco Bay watershed. Proposals are welcome from land trusts and government entities including municipalities and state agencies.

[Here](#) is the **Request for Proposals**.

Applicants are asked to share tax parcel lot/map information with [Matt Craig at CBEP](#) by 12/22/23. Completed applications are due Wednesday, 1/31/24.



mailed to you, please [contact us](#).

Application deadline: Monday,  
January 22, 2024, 9:00 a.m.

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## Other Funding & Learning Opportunities



**Municipal Stream Crossing Upgrade Grant Program:** The Municipal Stream Crossing Grant Program moved from Maine DEP to the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). MaineDOT is seeking applications for the Municipal Stream Crossing Program to provide competitive grants that help fund the upgrade of municipal culverts at stream crossings with the goal of improving fish and wildlife habitat and community safety. Applications must be received by January 12, 2024.

FMI: <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/grants/>

**Community Resilience Partnership Program:** The Governor's Office of Policy Innovation & the Future (GOPIF) have announced three Community Resilience Partnership grant opportunities.

Community Action Grants (up to \$50,000)

Enables eligible communities to implement projects that reduce energy use and



costs, transition to clean energy, and make communities in Maine more resilient to climate change.

**Register** for the Informational Webinar: December 20, 11:00am

Application Deadline: March 29, 2024

**View the Program Statement and Application Form**

#### Energy Efficiency Priorities Grants (up to \$100,000)

This is a special, one-time grant offering through the Community Resilience Partnership to distribute federal funds to disadvantaged communities for projects that improve energy efficiency and implement clean energy systems. GOPIF anticipates making 10 awards of approximately \$100,000 each to eligible communities through a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) process. To be eligible, communities must be enrolled in the Partnership AND be designated as "disadvantaged" by the federal EPA CEJST tool. See RFA for full eligibility requirements.

**Join Informational Webinar:** December 20, 1:30pm

Application Deadline: February 16, 2024

**View the RFA** and Application Form

Contact your GOPIF **Regional Coordinator** to explore other grant opportunities that may align with your project needs. These include:

- **Coastal Communities Grants,**
- **FEMA-Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC),**
- **EPA Clean School Bus**
- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant** (for tribes and 10 largest towns in Maine).

All of these grant details are live on the GOPIF **website**.

#### **Land for Maine's Future Program Call for Proposals**

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) announced its next call for Conservation and Recreation proposals. The latest requests are for Projects of Statewide Significance and Community Conservation Projects.

#### **Important Dates:**

- January 19, 2024 - Inquiry Forms due by 5:00 p.m.
- March 22, 2024 - Final Proposals due by 5:00 p.m.

Learn more and apply for funding **here**.

#### **2024 Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative Grants**

Schools and community-based organizations can now apply for the 2024 Maine Outdoor Learning Initiative grants through the Maine Department of Education (DOE). These grants support hands-on, engaging, interdisciplinary outdoor

learning and career exploration opportunities that connect students with Maine's amazing natural environments and landscapes. Learn more and find the link to the Request for Applications [here](#).

**Winter 2024 Changemakers Fellowships**

Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA) is seeking two fellows ages 18-25 to join their team from February 1, 2024 through June 2024.

Changemakers Fellowships provide leadership development for youth ages 18-25 who are passionate about environmental and social justice advocacy, with a specific focus on youth who have faced marginalization in exploring their passions for this work. Check the [MEEA website](#) for more information and to apply.

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## Free Workshop: Climate Change Impacts on Water Quality

Please join us for a free Zoom workshop about challenges and opportunities for private wells and small water systems in the coastal zone.

How is climate change impacting drinking water in coastal Maine, and what are some coastal and island communities doing to begin addressing these challenges? In this workshop, we will hear from a few island communities who have been taking steps to protect their drinking water, as well as from **Ryan Gordon, Hydrogeologist with Maine Geological Survey**.

We will have a follow-up workshop at a later date that is focused on technical assistance and grant opportunities to address these challenges.

**When: Thursday, January 16, 12noon - 1pm**

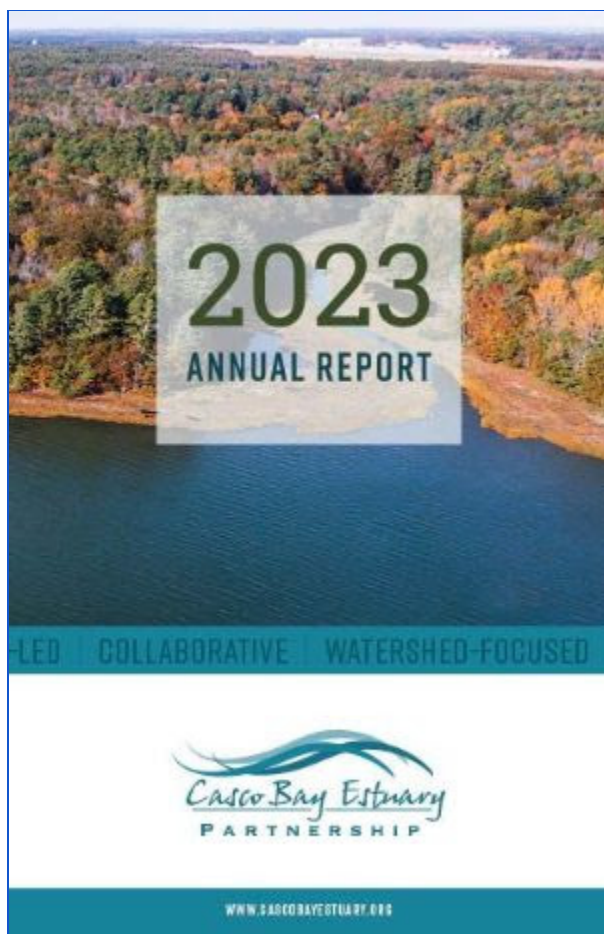
**Who:** Municipal staff, volunteer committee members, interested residents, including private well homeowners from small, rural coastal zone communities.

**Where:** Via Zoom. [REGISTER](#).

**FMI:** Contact [victoria.boundy@maine.edu](mailto:victoria.boundy@maine.edu)







***Check out all of the good work accomplished by CBEP and partners in 2023! Download the CBEP annual report [here](#) or flip through it [here](#).***

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