
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Facilitation Services for “A Blueprint for the Presumpscot River”

Issue Date: August 18, 2025

Proposal Deadline: September 3, 2025

OVERVIEW

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) invites proposals to provide Facilitation Services in support of a series of meetings leading towards preparation of a “Blueprint” for the Presumpscot River.

BACKGROUND

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership brings together municipal, state, and federal government organizations; nonprofits; local businesses; industry; area residents; researchers; and others who care about the Casco Bay watershed to protect our waters and help communities address water quality and resilience challenges.

We are a trusted authority, known for our technical skills, understanding of our region, support for municipalities, and ability to convene people around key conservation issues.

Since 1990, when Casco Bay was named an “estuary of national significance,” the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has supported CBEP’s regional work through the

National Estuary Program. CBEP is affiliated with the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine. Further information on CBEP is available on our website, <http://www.cascobayestuary.org>.

A BLUEPRINT FOR THE PRESUMPSCOT

The environmental, economic, and human health of our region depends on clean water. Nowhere is that more evident than in the thriving communities of the Presumpscot watershed. The waters of the region, including lakes, the River and its tributaries provide important recreational and economic amenities to residents and visitors alike. The Presumpscot drains two-thirds of the Casco Bay watershed, solidifying its importance to the region's economy and way of life. The Presumpscot watershed, with its proximity to greater Portland, includes some of the fastest growing communities in all of Maine. Thus, the region faces challenges determining how to manage growing populations while protecting and restoring the health of the River.

The threats are real. The River and tributaries show persistent water quality challenges, including elevated bacteria levels and low dissolved oxygen. Suburban development increases stormwater runoff, adding pollutants (including road salt) to our waters and altering hydrology, to the detriment of aquatic habitat. Dams and road crossings block movement of fish and other aquatic organisms. Habitats have been degraded by channel alteration, sediment deposition, and loss of vegetation along shorelines. Extreme weather, including warm winters, hot summers and severe storms put the health both of the river and the communities that line its shores at greater risk.

In the early winter of 2025, CBEP will convene a series of meetings to develop a "Blueprint" for the river. The Blueprint will be a high-level overview of goals for the river that identifies strategic priorities for the next 5 to 10 years and outlines key actions needed to move towards achieving those goals. The Blueprint is not the same as a watershed plan, because the focus will be on strategic direction, priorities, and goals, not implementation. The Blueprint should coordinate and prioritize implementation among participants already working to improve and protect the river. It comes at a time when there is a four-year moratorium on new point source discharges to the river, renewed focus on the impacts of dams to river health, research into emerging contaminants such



as PFAS, and nascent efforts to expand and evolve water quality monitoring to better understand and track changes. It is therefore an ideal time for this process.

We envision hosting three meetings late in 2025; dates will be determined with facilitators and key participants. The meetings likely will cover:

1. Policy needs;
2. Management actions; and
3. Scientific questions and monitoring needs.

However, we welcome ideas from facilitators about how to structure the planning process to achieve the goals of the Blueprint process.

CBEP will support the Blueprint process by allocating staff and/or contractor support to the planning process. CBEP staff will assist with meeting logistics. CBEP staff or a contractor will gather information to support discussion. We will make relevant scientific, technical, and other documents available to participants. CBEP or a contractor will prepare the final "Blueprint" document (based in part on meeting summaries prepared by the facilitators). We will work with a design firm to create a visually appealing, inspiring Blueprint document.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee has been named to shape the Blueprint process and help identify important participants. The steering committee includes participation from CBEP, Friends of Casco Bay, Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, the Town of Windham, Friends of the Presumpscot River, Sebago Clean Waters, Trout Unlimited, and Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The Steering Committee will meet with the selected facilitator to discuss goals and process design.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

CBEP seeks proposals from individuals or firms able to provide neutral facilitation services to help develop the Blueprint. CBEP anticipates that blueprint process will occur via a short series of meetings held over a period of about a month toward the end of 2025, but facilitators may suggest alternative schedules based on their experience, understanding of the task at hand and availability.



We seek services that include:

- Advising CBEP and the steering committee on process design such as meeting goals, sequencing of topics, and communication between meetings.
- Preparation of detailed meeting agendas, in consultation with the Steering Committee
- Supplementary services as necessary to support facilitation such as assisting with preparation of supporting information or drafting invitations
- Facilitation of three meetings (or more, based on recommendations for process design)
- Preparation of meeting summaries, Identification of priorities and documentation of areas of concordance and conflict.

PRODUCTS

The expected products to be provided to CBEP will include:

- Facilitation of three (or more) meetings
- Documentation of meetings and the blueprint process, including agendas, invitations, list of attendees, list of follow-up actions, and detailed meeting notes. as well as any other necessary documentation.
- Detailed, itemized invoices.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Proposals are due via email to natalie.bingham@maine.edu by midnight (12:00 a.m.) on
Wednesday, September 3, 2025.

The proposal shall contain the following:

Letter of Transmittal including complete contact information, signed by an authorized representative of the firm.

Narrative describing proposed approach to organizing and managing a multiple-meeting process to develop consensus around priorities for the River:

- Including suggested frequency of meetings, agenda-setting, meeting facilitation, record-keeping, reporting progress, decision-making, and an overall framework for making progress;
- Supplementary services as needed to support facilitation such as working with CBEP and the steering committee between meetings to ensure preparations for each meeting are complete, preparing supporting information.

Timeline including potential dates for three (or more) meetings, preferably in fall or winter of 2025

Budget. The project budget should include a clear cost breakdown, including hourly rates, estimated time and cost for each step or task, any additional costs such as travel, and estimated total cost. The budget should be organized around three tasks:

1. Developing the process. Budget for this task should be based on up to three meetings with the Steering Committee to develop meeting format, content, and process.
2. Facilitating the meetings (three or more meetings, as described), including pre-meeting coordination with CBEP staff and development of detailed agendas.
3. Documenting the meetings, including preparation of meeting notes and summaries.

Bids for the required components should not exceed \$15,000. Cost will be one, but not the only basis on which we evaluate proposals.

Statement of billing rates and policies. We recognize that the Blueprint process may evolve in response to input from the Steering Committee and participants, making level of effort difficult to estimate. Please explain how increases or decreases in required effort would be managed.

Statement of qualifications of the principal staff assigned to the project as well as the qualifications of the firm, 1 page maximum per person.

Examples of similar projects conducted by the firm, 1 paragraph maximum per project.

References including contact information, in the form of a list of references or letters of reference, 1 page maximum per reference letter, no more than 3 references.

Any exceptions to the requirements of this RFP.

THE TOTAL PROPOSAL PACKAGE SHOULD NOT EXCEED 10 PAGES

TIMELINE, REVIEW AND AWARD

Proposals are due via email to natalie.bingham@maine.edu by midnight (12:00 a.m.) on Wednesday, September 3, 2025.

CBEP will review proposals in early September. CBEP may request additional information or a short meeting with potential contractors before making a final selection. We anticipate contacting the successful bidder by mid-September. An announcement of award is anticipated by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, September 29, 2025.

Prospective bidders are welcome to contact CBEP staff for more information before submitting a proposal.

- Curtis Bohlen, CBEP Director, 207-780-4576, curtis.bohlen@maine.edu
- Natalie Bingham, CBEP Program Coordinator, 207-780-4306, natalie.bingham@maine.edu

Selection Criteria

The following criteria will be used in reviewing the proposals and selecting the firm:

- Understanding of the project
- Proposed approach to the Blueprint process
- Qualifications and experience of firm and individuals proposed to work on project.
- Timeline and availability (project must commence in fall of 2025).
- Fees and rates.
- Other criteria as identified by the Steering Committee.

Award and Follow-Up

A contract agreement will be entered into between Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, University of Maine System, and the successful firm prior to work commencing. The successful contractor will be required to enroll as a supplier in the University of Maine eProcurement system, Maine Street Marketplace. Timing of payments and invoicing will be negotiated depending on the project timeline.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The University of Southern Maine is an EEO/AA employer, and does not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, genetic information or veteran's status in employment, education, and all other programs and activities.