



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Maquoit & Middle Bay Habitat Plan

Developing a Science-Based Aquatic Habitat
Prioritization Plan in a subregion of the Casco Bay Watershed

Issue Date: August 15, 2025

Proposal Deadline: September 7, 2025

OVERVIEW

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP), in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Coastal Program (GOMCP), is seeking qualified consultant services to support the development of the first of a series of science-based subregional aquatic habitat prioritization plans for Casco Bay and its watershed. These sub-regional plans will inform implementation of Goal 1 of the [Casco Bay Plan](#): *to protect, restore, and enhance the key habitats that sustain the ecosystem health of Casco Bay and its surrounding watershed, now and into the future.*

This first subregional plan will both 1) provide science-based priorities for CBEP's habitat resilience, restoration, and protection efforts in the Maquoit and Middle Bay region of Casco Bay; and, 2) provide a prototype or template for developing future subregional habitat plans. *Preparation of deliverables, including the plan, must be complete by December 31, 2025.*

BACKGROUND

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) 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>.

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

Established in 1991, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program (GOMCP) is one of 24 Coastal Program offices in the United States. The Program was established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to build partnerships to identify, protect and restore nationally significant habitat for fish, wildlife and people. The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program provides technical expertise, funding, planning, and strategic direction to support healthy populations of fish and wildlife. GOMCP works in coastal habitats and watersheds taking an ecosystem approach to maximize our effectiveness. We focus our efforts on habitat Protection, Restoration and Connecting People to Nature.

Context

The long-term health of Casco Bay and the Casco Bay Watershed depends on vital habitats that protect water quality and support the region’s abundant wildlife and commercially valuable fish, shellfish, and seaweeds. Habitat protection, aquatic connectivity, and the restoration of natural stream processes benefit human communities as well; supporting fisheries and tourism, providing recreational opportunities, decreasing flood impacts, and reducing infrastructure repair and maintenance needs.

CBEP is committed to enhancing, protecting, and restoring critical coastal habitats (e.g., eelgrass beds, intertidal areas and tidal mudflats); planning for future migration of intertidal habitats like tidal marshes (as sea levels rise); and conserving the undeveloped forests, wetlands, floodplains and shorelines that protect water quality. Through these efforts, we strive to strengthen the Bay's ecosystem functions and support the ability of the Bay and aquatic ecosystems throughout the watershed to respond constructively to changing climate and rising seas.

CBEP takes a landscape approach to habitat by focusing on geographic sub-regions and emphasizing connections between and among habitats rather than isolated species or habitat types. The health of the Bay (as well as of our lakes, rivers, and streams) depends on the forests and wetlands that protect natural hydrology and water quality. Connectivity among aquatic habitats is essential to help organisms migrate, withstand climatic extremes and sea level rise, and maintain their populations in the face of established and emerging stressors.

Historic anthropogenic impacts have left their mark on our embayments, rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes. Many of those impacts also affect how aquatic ecosystems connect to one another, as well as fundamental natural hydrological processes, disrupting movement of sediment, nutrients, organic matter, wood, water, and the ability of biota to move among habitats. These changes have altered how regional habitat networks function, making them more vulnerable to climate change and other stressors.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

This RFP seeks proposals that will use landscape-scale geospatial analysis to inform implementation of CBEP Strategies and Actions embedded in Goal 1 of the *Casco Bay Plan*, which collectively focus on aquatic habitat protection, restoration & enhancement, and resilience. The goal is to improve ecosystem function by aligning actions across habitat types and jurisdictional boundaries. Applicants are encouraged to closely review Goal 1 of the Casco Bay Plan, and the nested Strategies and Actions, in developing a proposal. The most recent (2024) Plan is available on the CBEP website at <https://www.cascobayestuary.org/strategic-planning/casco-bay-plan/>.

The Maquoit and Middle Bay Habitat Plan should integrate scientific data with local and regional priorities to guide resource allocation and decision-making in the face of ongoing climate and land use changes.

While the focus of the analysis should be on landscape-scale analysis, contractors may choose to consider target species to help guide their analysis. If so, target species can be identified in advance (as part of the response to this RFP) or during the project period via review of existing scientific literature, management plans, and other documents as informed by discussion with CBEP and GOMCP staff.

CBEP anticipates developing additional subregional plans in coming years as funding and staff capacity allow. As the first of our new subregional plans, the Maquoit and Middle Bay Habitat Plan will provide a template or prototype for plans developed in the future.

Methods should:

- Emphasize rapid development of plans based principally on existing data and priorities articulated in existing policy documents such as state or municipal plans;
- Incorporate synthesis of local information on habitat distribution and condition with scientific understanding of ecosystem function and interconnections among habitats;
- Be, to the extent possible, replicable in other subregions of Casco Bay or subwatersheds of the Casco Bay watershed;
- Document opportunities where habitat protection, restoration/enhancement, and resilience priorities could also contribute to community resilience.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The focus of this effort will be on Maquoit and Middle Bays, in the northern portion of Casco Bay, Maine. At a minimum, the analysis should consider:

- Maquoit Bay and Maquoit Bay
- The Maquoit Bay and Middle Bay watersheds
- Islands within the two Bays

The areas to be considered should include the Bays themselves (including notable intertidal and subtidal habitats), tidal & freshwater wetlands, freshwater rivers and streams (intermittent and perennial) and their buffers (including supporting upland habitats), and aquifers.

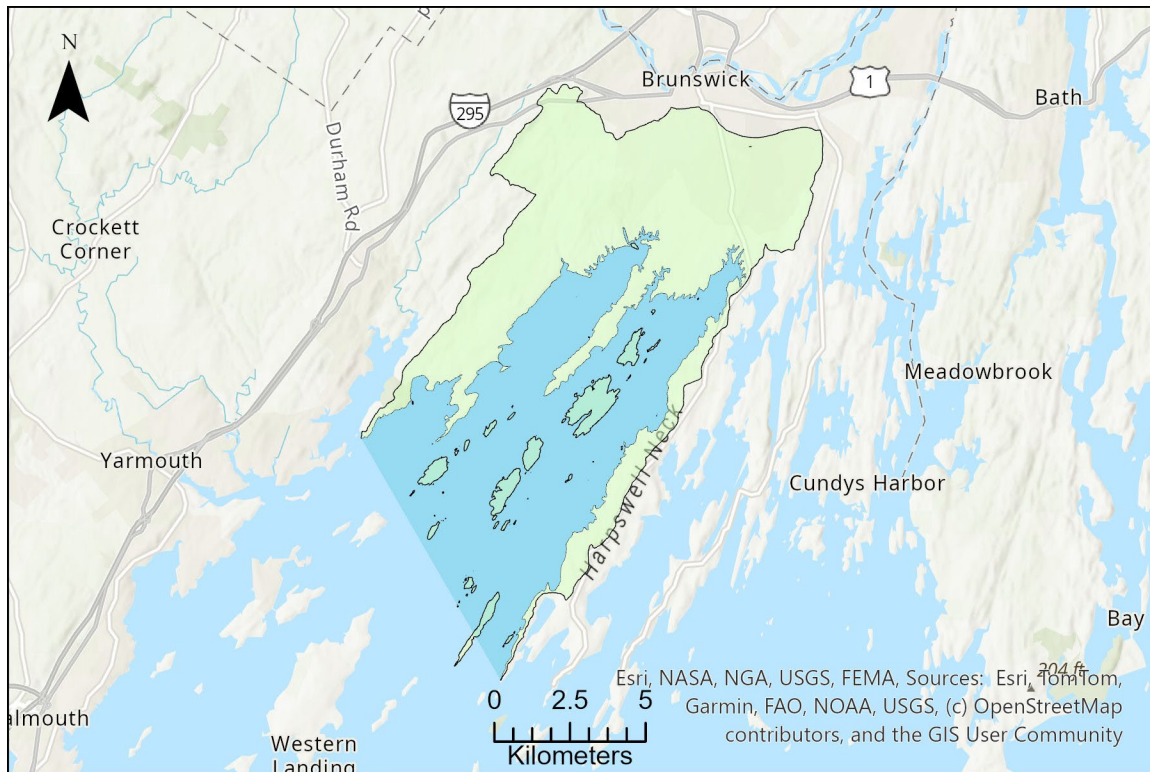


Figure 1: Map of Maquoit and Middle Bays and Maquoit and Middle bay watersheds. This represents the approximate borders of the study area. Contractors can propose slightly different boundaries based on their expertise or available data.

Products

- Initial project kick-off/planning meeting and 1-2 mid-project check-in meeting(s) with CBEP and GOMCP staff.
- Documentation of data sources, processes and procedures used to develop the Plan.
- Geospatial priorities for habitat-related action in the region. Priorities should emerge from the process, but could include habitat protection, restoration, or resilience actions, as well as recommendations for additional data development, ongoing habitat management, or monitoring. Priorities are to be principally science based and data-driven, building off landscape-level analysis and ecological understanding, using quantitative metrics such as acres or linear miles of habitat restored. Secondary considerations for priority setting may be evaluated based on consultant recommendations as funds permit.
- Maps at the subregional scale that document priorities and place them in geographic context, demonstrating relationship of high value sites to other coastal habitat, protected areas, critical infrastructure, and other important community assets.
- A habitat plan targeting community partners, comprised of maps and a summary narrative.
- Detailed, itemized invoices.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Proposals due via email to natalie.bingham@maine.edu by midnight. on Sunday
September 7, 2025

Address questions regarding this Request for Proposals to: Matt Craig, CBEP Habitat
Program Manager, at matthew.craig@maine.edu.

Interested consultants should submit a proposal including the following

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

Narrative (no more than 7 pages) providing a description of how the individual or firm proposes to develop the Subregional habitat Plan. The narrative should include:

An overview of how the consultant plans to conduct the planning process. The narrative should be organized into separate steps or tasks that reflect how the contractor will organize the work(e.g., "Information Gathering," "Scientific Review," "Planning" and "Report Preparation").

An explanation of how the contractor plans to gather information on community priorities and perspectives. That information can be gathered using a variety of methods, review of existing documents, conversations with officials, or community meetings. Legal restrictions on CBEP federal funding mean that community surveys are unlikely to be allowed.

A description of how the contractor proposes to coordinate with CBEP and GOMCP staff. Coordination should include at a minimum a kickoff meeting and a meeting partway through the process.

Timeline. A timeline of key steps (as described in the Narrative) that demonstrates how the contractor plans to complete the project by December 31, 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. Bids for the required components should not exceed \$25,000. Cost will be one, but not the only basis on which we evaluate proposals.

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.

SELECTION CRITERIA

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

- Understanding of the project
- Proposed approach to rapid habitat planning process
- Qualifications and experience of firm and individuals proposed to work on project.
- Timeline and availability (project must be completed by December 31, 2025)
- Fees and rates.
- Other criteria+ as identified by the Steering Committee.

TIMELINE, REVIEW AND AWARD

**Proposals due via email to natalie.bingham@maine.edu by midnight. on Sunday
September 7, 2025**

CBEP will review proposals by September 12th and award a contract as soon as possible thereafter. CBEP may request additional information or a short meeting with potential contractors before making a final selection. An announcement of award is anticipated by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 19, 2025.

Award and Follow-Up

A contract will be entered into between the University of Maine System and the successful bidder, on behalf of Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, 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 will be tied to the project timeline. Invoices should be submitted after each task or key milestones (no more often than monthly and no less often than quarterly).

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.