

DRAFT

MARINE RESOURCES

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INTRODUCTION

Access to the ocean and its abundant marine resources has been a staple of the coastal economy in the State of Maine for centuries. This ocean access has been described at a state level as the working waterfront. Past and present uses of the working waterfront in Belfast include, but are not limited to: commercial fishing, aquaculture, rail transportation, marine transportation, boat building and repair, and of course, recreational opportunities.

Citizens who participated in a community planning process called ‘The Vibrancy Project’ ranked the maintenance and protection of a real and friendly working waterfront as the highest priority measure to improve quality of life and commerce in the City. The purpose of this chapter is to help the City identify, manage and protect its marine resources and working waterfront features in order to safeguard the local economy that is dependent on these uses.

KEY ISSUES

Belfast, like many Maine communities, experienced problems with operation of its public sewer system, including occasional overflows of sewage into the coastal waters of Belfast Bay. Belfast’s sewer system consists of 31 miles of sewer pipe, much of which are over 100 years old and in extremely poor condition. The City has taken very aggressive measures to address this pollution issue.

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In 2000, the City contracted with its engineering firm, Olver Associates, to prepare a Sewer System Master Plan to abate problems associated with Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO). Since 2001, the City has completed many of the identified projects at a public cost of over \$10 million dollars to eliminate CSO's, upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, and significantly decrease the amount of infiltration into the City sewer system. Since then, Belfast, like most Maine communities, has experienced a significant increase in the annual amount of rainfall; however, the sewer improvements constructed have significantly reduced the number and intensity of overflows into the Bay. See the Public Facilities chapter and Capital Investment Plan in the Fiscal Capacity chapter of this plan for more information.

WATER QUALITY AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

Water quality can be degraded by many factors, resulting from natural occurrences, and human activity. Pollution can be classified by its origin. Point source pollution originates from a single point, such as an outflow pipe, overboard discharge including untreated wastes, from a residence, business, or factory. The Maine DEP, Bureau of Land and Water Quality lists three overboard discharges and five wastewater outfalls approved within Belfast. See the Water Resources Map for their locations.

The City has few current concerns regarding how fishery resources are being managed at the local and regional level. DMR has instituted seasonal restrictions that affect when construction can occur in near-shore waters; however, the agency has exercised reasonable and locally desired flexibility in applying these standards to construction projects. Further, recreational fishermen have not expressed any significant concern regarding the condition of fishery resources that are subject to recreational fishing. Unfortunately, few salmon now enter Belfast Bay or the Passagassawakeag River and it appears that salmon will not become a significant local recreational fishery.

COASTAL LAND USE

Belfast Harbor, starting in the mid-1990's, has seen a dramatic increase in growth and activity. The amount of growth is similar to that experienced along much of the Maine Coast. While activity began to level off in 2008 - 2009 due to the large impact the economy plays in both the boating industry and shorefront real estate markets, the amount of activity in the harbor increased significantly in 2011 - 2012 with the development of the Front Street Shipyard, a major boat repair, refitting, storage and building operation. The arrival of the Shipyard combined with ongoing pressures on the harbor prompted the City, in 2011 - 2012 to prepare a new inner harbor management plan. The City Council adopted the plan and accompanying Ordinance amendments recommended by the Harbor Committee and the City and its Harbormaster to

implement this plan. The harbor is a critical vibrant part of the community, and the management of the harbor has been effective overall.

In 2019 there were 309 total moorings in Belfast Harbor. Recently, the establishment of moorings for riparian or shorefront owners, along with an increase in transient cruisers renting overnight moorings and dock space has put additional pressure on the amount of moorings available. There are also a large number of boaters from Islesboro, Castine, Northport and surrounding areas who come for lunch or stay for the day to enjoy the downtown or one of the many activities held on the waterfront. A cruise line brings 'mini' passenger ships into Belfast and the harbor is now among the top 10 in Maine for the number of cruise ship passenger visits per year.

There remains room for further development in the harbor, including setting additional moorings and expanding slip space and developing the inner harbor, however, any increase of substantial slip space in the outer harbor may largely depend on creating additional protection that would need to be provided by a breakwater or wave attenuator. The alluring assets of Belfast Harbor may be attributed to its wide diversity in users, including strong support in maintaining a working waterfront, fisheries and aquaculture.

MANAGEMENT

Belfast adopted an official management plan for the harbor in 1991 and an inner harbor management plan in 2011-2012. The City has been implementing provisions of the plans including approaches such as involving the Belfast Harbor Committee in the review of Shoreland Permits for marine facilities, establishing five respective management districts for the harbor and associated wharf line limits for marine facilities, and periodically amending the Harbor Operations Ordinance. In 2010, the City Council authorized the City to secure professional consulting services to prepare a downtown – waterfront plan. A key component of this planning effort involved examining use and development of the working waterfront area, including both public and privately owned lands, and the use of the Inner Harbor area. This effort led to preparation and adoption of Ordinances for the Inner Harbor area, as well as the construction of an expanded commercial fisherman wharf that was completed in 2013.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report from January, 2021, the Belfast city manager request that District initiate a study under Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960 to determine the feasibility of implementing a navigation improvement project for Belfast Harbor. The town requested a study for construction of breakwaters across the outer harbor to further protect the harbor from wave action and storms. This improvement would potentially provide further protection of harbor anchorages and allow for expansion of commercial and recreational activities.

COASTAL ACCESS

Current capacity of City owned facilities will be adequate to meet the anticipated demand of commercial fishermen and recreational users. Proposed improvements over the next 10 years to these facilities are aimed at enhancing public access, ensuring there are adequate support facilities for harbor operations, and providing needed maintenance to existing facilities. Belfast has numerous rangeways (rights-of way) to the shore that were inventoried and surveyed in 2010. Many rangeways have been improved to increase pedestrian access to the water front. Recently, art installations have been added along the rangeways to draw attention and increase use.

A key improvement to the waterfront was the 2013 expansion of the commercial fishermen's wharf at the City Landing. The commercial fishermen's wharf supports most of the local fishing fleet, primarily lobstermen.

SCENIC RESOURCES

The Public Landing, Heritage Park, Thompsons Wharf, Steamboat Landing, and Belfast City Park, have protected visual and physical access to coastal waters. An inventory of additional visual access points is recommended in this plan, including water views from the footbridge, Hayford Hill (Route 3), Little River/Goose River (Searsport Avenue/Route 1). Beyond publicly owned land, and land in conservation, such as that owned by the Coastal Mountain Land Trust along the Passagassawakeag River, other scenic views are not protected.

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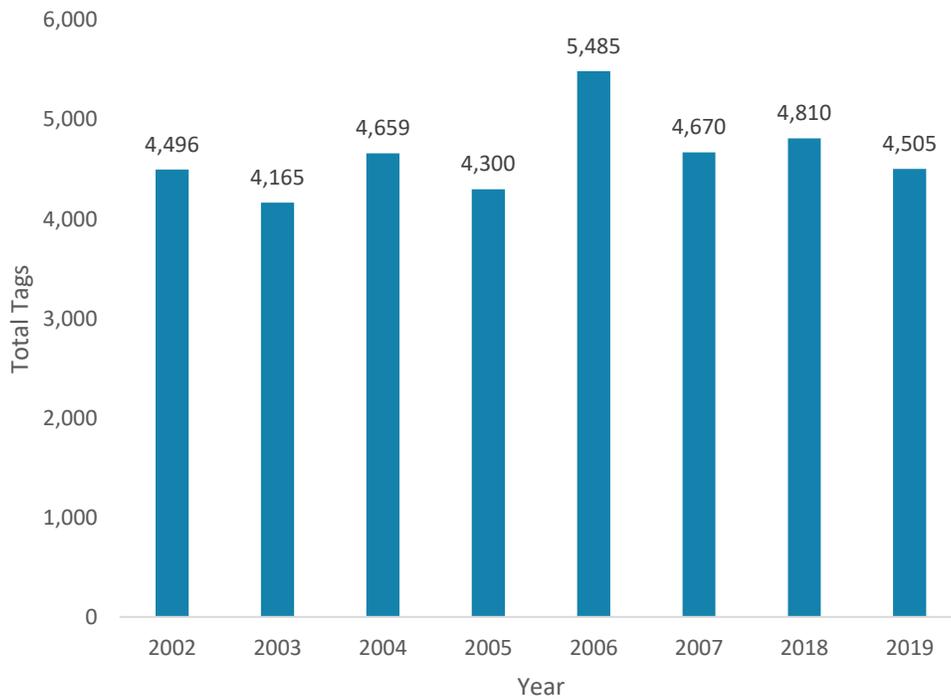
CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Marine Resource Licenses Held by Belfast Residents

Type/Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2018	2019
Dealers	19	17	14	13	13	11	11	15
Harvesters	58	67	52	52	49	42	19	20

Source: Maine DMR

Total Lobster Trap Tags Fished by Belfast Residents



Source: Maine DMR

Fishes and Decapods Found in the Vicinity of Belfast Bay

Genus and Species	Common Name
<i>Crangon septemspinosa</i>	Sand Shrimp
<i>Carcinus maenas</i>	Green Crab
<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>	Threespine Stickleback
<i>Apeltes quadracus</i>	Fourspine Stickleback
<i>Pungitius pungitius</i>	Ninespine Stickleback
<i>Tautoglabrus adspersus</i>	Cunner
<i>Cyclopterus lumpus</i>	Lumpfish
<i>Myoxocephalus aeneus</i>	Grubby
<i>Pholis gunnellus</i>	Rock Gunnel
<i>Syngnathus fuscus</i>	Northern Pinefish
<i>Microgadus tomcod</i>	Atlantic Tomcod
<i>Urophycis tenuis</i>	White Hake
<i>Psuedopleuronectes americanus</i>	Winter Flounder

Source: Maine DMR

The City also notes that Mackerel & Stripers are in the River, and that both attract recreational fishing interest (Maine DMR).

See the map titled Land Cover for the locations of developed, forested, cultivated, and open areas along and near the coast. See the map titled Current Land Use for the existing zoning along and near the coast including waterfront zones. Most development along the coast is residential, not water dependent. Commercial uses and water dependent commercial uses are primarily located adjacent to downtown and along a stretch of shoreline that is about 3,500 lineal feet in length. Water dependent uses are found at and near landings, piers and wharfs, which are adjacent to downtown. It also is noted that little of the coastline in Belfast is well suited for significant water dependent commercial activities, and that all commercial fishermen operate out of the City's harbor facilities and that no individual fisherman has their own dock.

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

Belfast participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, and the City has adopted Floodplain Management Ordinance provisions (Chapter 78 of the Belfast Code). See the maps titled Flood Zones and Flood Zones (Downtown) for the location and types of flood zones. Special flood hazard areas are inundated by 100-year floods, i.e., less than a one percent chance

of being equaled or exceeded in a given year. Ordinance provisions limit development in flood prone areas and require that the development that is allowed in these areas is suitably designed to withstand flooding. The City updated its Floodplain Management Ordinance and associated FEMA floodplain maps in 2015.

SHORELAND/WATERFRONT ZONING

Belfast has adopted Shoreland Zoning provisions (Chapter 82 of the Belfast Code), which are intended to provide protection to shorefront areas, within a 250-foot area from the normal high water line of all tidal waters, identified freshwater wetlands that are 10 acres or more, the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, salt meadows, wetlands associated with great ponds, rivers and specified flood hazard areas. An area of 75 feet from the normal high water line is set for other water bodies including tributary streams. These shoreland zones include Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Urban Residential, General Development, Stream Protection, Stream Development, Manufactured Housing Community, and Waterfront Development. Waterfront Development districts include Waterfront I "A" Downtown, Waterfront Mixed Use, and Searsport Avenue Waterfront. Land use standards are defined for each zone. Waterfront districts allow marine and water dependent uses, in addition to a range of other mixed uses. The City notes that its Shoreland Ordinance provisions often vary from those identified in the State Shoreland Model Ordinance, and that the State Department of Environmental Protection has reviewed and approved all City Ordinance provisions. See the ordinance provisions for more information on these standards and permitted uses.

Belfast has adopted harbor management ordinance provisions (Chapter 30 of the Belfast Code) to regulate marine activities within Belfast waters (harbor and bay). A City Council-appointed Harbor Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the City Council through the City Manager, and Harbormaster. This Committee also provides recommendations to the Planning Board in its review of proposed docks and piers that require permits in the shoreland zone. The City Council and City Manager appoint a Harbormaster who oversees the city's moorings, floats, docks, ramps, breakwater, channels, and adjacent municipal property and ensures that the public grounds maintenance division provides for their proper maintenance. As previously noted, the City Council, in 2012, adopted new provisions to regulate use of the inner harbor area. All Harbor Ordinances can be found in the City Code of Ordinances.