

## Habitat protection in Maine

### Gulf of Maine Coastal Program



Nearly a century ago, farsighted people began working to protect Maine's natural beauty. Past conservation successes continue to inspire people, and today, there are more than 100 locally and state-based land trusts, as well as state and federal agencies and individual landowners working in Maine to protect important habitat for its scenic, cultural, recreational and biological values. However, only 6% of Maine's landscape is publicly protected for conservation purposes in perpetuity – one of the lowest percentages in the country. In the past decade, the pace of development has accelerated in Maine. People are spreading out, creating urban and suburban sprawl around traditional city and town centers. Coastal properties are “hot” in the real estate market, stressing our collective ability to protect coastal lands with rich biological resources. In addition, timber company ownership in the North Woods is rapidly declining, and new owners with development interests are converting prime sites on lakes, rivers and ridges into second home sites. These development patterns threaten to degrade, fragment and eliminate habitat for fish and wildlife, reduce public access for outdoor recreation, and tear away the foundations of what makes Maine appealing to residents and visitors.

Since its inception, Gulf of Maine Coastal Program has identified highest value habitat for migratory birds, diadromous fish and federally threatened and endangered species – and then, worked in partnership with willing landowners and other interested stakeholders to raise funds and permanently protect important areas before they are lost to development. In order to help direct land protection efforts to high value habitat, and to provide credible data to support important land protection proposals, Gulf of Maine Coastal Program biologists have completed several habitat analyses, focusing on rare and declining migratory birds of concern, diadromous fish, endangered species and coastal nesting islands.

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program staff shares biological information and habitat maps with land protection partners to help inform and support land protection efforts. For example, Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Lake Umbagog NWR and Rachel Carson NWR have used data from our analyses to direct their land acquisition efforts to areas with greatest biological values. We have also incorporated some of our habitat data in *Beginning with Habitat*, a statewide initiative to provide Maine towns and land trusts with habitat information that encourages local efforts to permanently protect high value habitat and direct development towards areas with less sensitive habitat values. We regularly share our knowledge of federal grant programs with state agencies and land trusts in order to successfully compete for federal grants to permanently protect important habitat.

To-date, we have been successful in working with land protection partners to bring more than \$37 million in Fish and Wildlife Service-linked federal funds to Maine, including the following key sources that support habitat protection initiatives:

- North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants
  - Large grants (\$11.75M)
  - Small grants (\$1.25M)
- National Coastal Wetland Conservation Act grants (\$4.66M)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants (\$12M)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund grants (\$3M)
- Recovery Land Acquisition Grants (\$3.2M)
- Casco Bay Estuary Project Habitat Protection Fund grants (\$375K)

Using a non-regulatory and voluntary approach to protecting habitat, we have coordinated with partners around the state to permanently protect more than 1.68 million acres of coastal nesting islands, riparian habitat along wild Atlantic salmon rivers, coastal salt marshes and upland buffers, and forests in the North Woods.

**For more information on permanently protecting habitat, go to:**

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/gulfofmaine/projects/protect.htm>

For further information, please contact:

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<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/gulfofmaine>



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*Sampling of habitat protection sites from major  
federal funding sources  
(fee and easement acquisitions)*

**Large North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants (early 1990s - present)**

*(See "NAWCA Grants in Maine fact sheet" for comprehensive list)*

14 Large NAWCA grants funded, 1 Large NAWCA grant pending final approval

1,455,464 acres wetlands and upland buffer permanently protected

\$11.75M Large NAWCA funds

**Small North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants (1998 - present)**

*(See NAWCA Grants in Maine fact sheet for comprehensive list)*

26 Small NAWCA grants funded, 3 Small NAWCA grants pending final approval

16,728 acres wetlands and upland buffer permanently protected

\$1.24M Small NAWCA funds

**National Coastal Wetland Conservation Act Grants**

*(See "National Coastal Wetland Grants in Maine" fact sheet for comprehensive list)*

12 Coastal Wetland Grants, 2 more pending

2,896 acres wetlands and upland buffer permanently protected

\$4.66M CWG funds

**Maine Atlantic Salmon Conservation Fund & other salmon fund grants**

*(See "Maine's Wild Atlantic Salmon" fact sheet for list of MASCF grants)*

66 projects permanently protecting riparian habitat along wild Atlantic salmon rivers

81,000 acres of riparian habitat permanently protected

\$11.6M National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funds

**Maine Wildlife Habitat Initiative Grants (1997-1999)**

26 projects

4,832.6 acres high value fish and wildlife habitat permanently protected

\$375K National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funds

**Recovery Land Acquisition Grants (Atlantic salmon)**

4 projects (Sheepscot, Narraguagus and Machias I & II)

43,089 acres

\$3.172M

**Casco Bay Estuary Partnership  
Habitat Protection Fund**

*(See "Habitat Protection near Casco Bay" fact sheet for comprehensive list)*

21 habitat protection grants, 2 more pending

3,500 acres permanently protected

\$375K EPA funds

