

Habitat protection in the Kennebec Estuary...

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

Since 1992, the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition (Coalition), including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and other national, state and local conservation organizations, have worked together to protect lands in Kennebec Estuary — one of the state's key Focus Areas within the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

The Kennebec Estuary includes freshwater and salt water tidal marshes and mudflats that offer important habitat for thousands of migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and diadromous (searun) fish. The region also provides habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species, including nesting osprey and eagles, short-nosed sturgeon, piping plover, and least and roseate terns. This pristine area is located close to the state's largest population centers and its habitat values are threatened by increasing development.

In the early 1990s, biologists from the USFWS Gulf of Maine Coastal Program used data from Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and other sources to complete a GIS analysis identifying 27,000 acres of the highest value waterfowl wetlands, associated upland buffer zones, and threatened and endangered species habitat in the Kennebec Estuary. Over the years, that information has been supplemented by other GIS mapping efforts, including the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program's analysis of important habitat for 91 priority trust species, and the statewide *Beginning with Habitat* analysis. With priority habitats mapped and clearly identified, negotiations with willing landowners, coordinated by Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and several local land trusts, took center stage.



black duck



Lower Kennebec salt marsh

From the mid-1990s to the present, the Coalition successfully applied for a series of grants for land protection. To-date, five North American Wetlands Conservation grants, four National Coastal Wetland Conservation Act grants, a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant and a state Land for Maine's Future Program grant have been awarded in the Kennebec Estuary. All together, \$5.45 million in federal funds and more than \$18.6 million in non-federal funds (including the value of lands donated for conservation purposes by willing landowners) have been used to permanently protect 11,500 acres of wetlands and associated upland buffers. Protected lands are managed by The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, local land trusts and Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. *See reverse for a map highlighting progress in habitat protection.*

For further information, please contact:

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This evolving habitat protection success story is about the best of partnerships. Working together, the Coalition has already accomplished what none of the organizations could have achieved independently. Gulf of Maine Coastal Program biologists identify priority habitats, interpret biological data, provide strategic advice in selecting and developing nationally competitive grants, document biological values and create maps for grant proposals, write, review and edit draft proposals, and administer federal grants in support of partners. State and local land trusts offer site-specific knowledge, identify potential acquisition sites, negotiate with willing landowners, identify non-federal funding sources and actively participate in writing and administering grants. Coalition partners also conduct outreach to promote the land protection success stories. By integrating our collective strengths, and by retaining a flexible, non-regulatory and voluntary approach, the Coalition is well on its way to turning its ambitious vision into thousands of acres of permanently protected habitat -- for waterbirds, migratory fish, endangered species, and people.



For more information on the Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition, go to:

http://www.fws.gov/northeast/gulfofmaine/downloads/fact_sheets/MWPC_fact_sheet.pdf

Habitat protection progress in the Kennebec Estuary



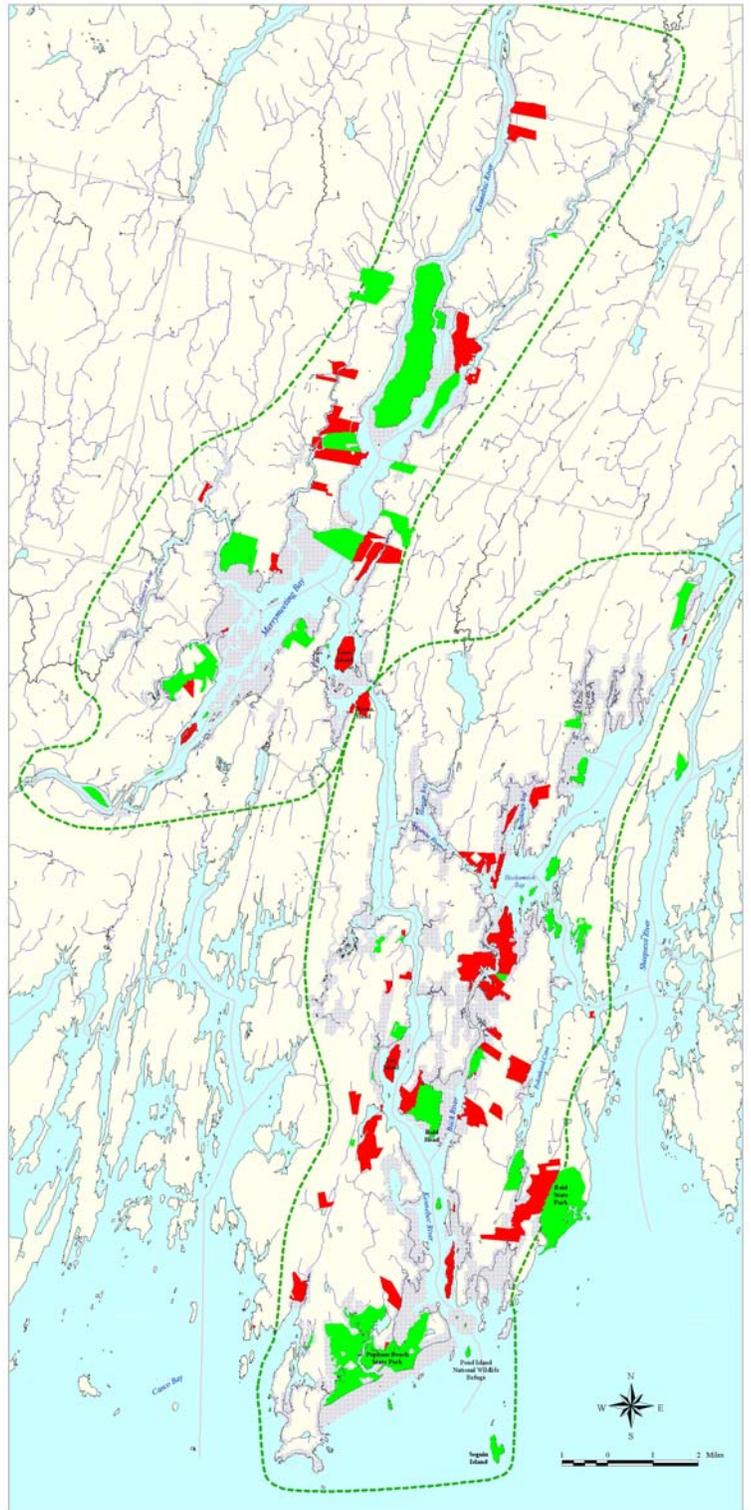
Bald eagles, once common, are increasing in population and successfully raising young in the Kennebec Estuary.



Lesser yellowlegs, one of the many species of shorebirds that depends on rich wetland habitat in the Kennebec Estuary for feeding and roosting during migration.



Striped bass, one of a dozen species of diadromous fish that migrate through and live in the Kennebec Estuary.



 Land protection prior to 1994

 Land protected after 1994 with support of Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition