

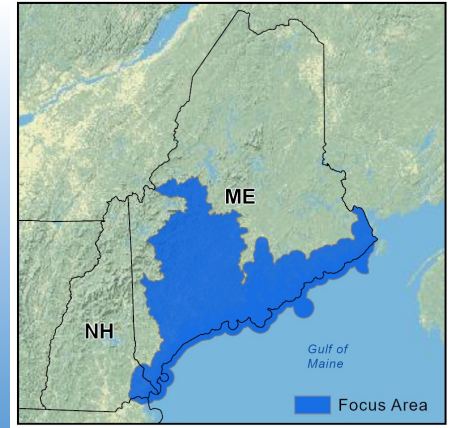


# Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

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**Office Overview:** The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program works to protect and restore habitat to sustain diverse and abundant populations of fish, wildlife, and plants throughout the Gulf of Maine ecosystem and coastal watersheds. Our vision is an ecologically resilient Gulf of Maine landscape and functioning coastal ecosystems that support fish, wildlife, and people for the benefit of current and future generations. We work with partners,

providing technical expertise, funding, planning, and strategic direction on various conservation and restoration projects, emphasizing at-risk species, aquatic connectivity, and coastal resilience. Our office works with communities and partners to understand their needs as they relate to the species and habitats of the Gulf of Maine, supporting community restoration and citizen science projects.



**Gulf of Maine Focus Area:** The Gulf of Maine extends from the Canadian Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick south to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Over 10 million people live in the Gulf of Maine watershed, which serves as the economic and cultural lifeblood for its inhabitants. The Gulf of Maine is also home to multitudes of species and habitats, like the endangered **Atlantic salmon, river herring, saltmarsh sparrow, and roseate tern**. Ecosystem processes that are impacted by climate change inextricably link the species and habitats of the Gulf of Maine. Rising temperatures, sea-level rise, more extreme weather events, and habitat fragmentation are just some threats affecting the fish, wildlife, and human communities within the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

the **Merrymeeting Bay Atlantic Salmon Recovery Unit and the Casco Bay Estuary** watershed are priorities as they present opportunities to advance conservation with willing partners.

- **Watershed restoration and diadromous fish conservation;**
- **Saltmarsh conservation and coastal resilience;**
- **Land and water protection; and,**
- **Connecting people to nature.**

Within this focus area, our work will advance the following four priorities:



Over the next five years, The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program will take an ecosystem approach to address conservation challenges in Maine and coastal New Hampshire. Our focus area, which reflects approximately 25 percent of the Gulf of Maine watershed, includes Maine and New Hampshire's entire coast to the head of the tide. In addition, midcoast Maine watersheds within

2022 to 2026 Conservation Targets	Aquatic Barriers Removed	Stream Miles Reopened	Wetland Acres Protected	Wetland Acres Restored	Upland Acres Protected	Upland Acres Restored	Stream Miles Restored
	5	40	2000	200	2500	5	2



## Upcoming Actions:

### Watershed Restoration and Aquatic Connectivity:

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program staff provide technical assistance to the Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF), The Nature Conservancy, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources to remove **Walton's Mill Dam on Temple Stream in Farmington, Maine**. The dam is a complete barrier to **Atlantic salmon, American eel, sea lamprey, at-risk turtles**, and other aquatic organisms within the Upper Sandy River watershed. Removal of the dam will restore 1 mile of the river to a natural, free-flowing state and **reconnect over 40 miles of upstream cold-water habitat to the mainstem Sandy River**. Staff are conducting hydrologic analyses, habitat assessments, and a geomorphic survey of the reach to inform the design, assist with permitting, and help with fundraising. In addition, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program and ASF are working with the University of Maine-Farmington to monitor the effects of the dam removal and educate students at the college.

### Partnering on Saltmarsh Conservation and Coastal Resilience:



The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program will work with partners to restore saltmarsh and estuarine habitats during the next five

years. These habitats benefit a multitude of species like the saltmarsh sparrow and river herring and support commercial and recreational fishing and outdoor activities. Restoring habitat and hydrological function to **Back River Creek** at Pleasant Cove in Woolwich will return tidal exchange to upstream wetlands, **restore 140 acres of tidal marsh, and increase the resilience** of Rt. 1, a significant piece of infrastructure utilized by millions annually. This multimillion-dollar and multiple-partner effort embodies collaborative



conservation and is indicative of the opportunities that exist as we work to support fish, wildlife, and people in the context of climate change. In addition, we will work with local communities to incorporate fish, wildlife, and habitat considerations into coastal resilience planning. Staff provide technical expertise as part of a multi-partner effort funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a regional coastal resilience plan for southern Maine. This effort will inform coastal adaptation planning, identify vulnerable natural and built infrastructure areas, and identify on-the-ground resilience projects and studies for future funding and implementation. Supporting Land and Water Conservation: The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program will work with willing landowners, land trusts, watershed associations, town officials, and federal and state agencies to

permanently protect high-value habitat before it is lost during the next five years. We will work with partners and use biological data, GIS mapping, and our expertise in coastal Maine ecology to identify and assess critical habitats and develop products to inform decision-making and grant applications. We will also align habitat protection efforts with restoration and coastal resilience efforts to maximize our conservation impact and support collaborative conservation, such as the **America the Beautiful** initiative, and the protection goals of **Maine's Climate Action Plan: "Maine Won't Wait."**

### Connecting People to Nature:

The Gulf of Maine Coastal Program and Maine Audubon are working with the Bureau of Parks and Lands to recruit a long-term volunteer base to plant and maintain demonstration gardens at three state parks in Maine. To expand the volunteer network beyond park visitors, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Program and Maine Audubon will collaborate with non-profit organizations in the vicinity of each park focused on building life skills for traditionally under-represented or at-risk groups. We will work with these organizations to engage volunteers, encourage them to lead planting efforts, and provide resources and training that will allow them to participate fully (e.g., plant identification and gardening training sessions, transportation assistance). This project will increase habitat viability for native Maine pollinators on public and private lands, engage diverse audiences in stewardship, and build a replicable model to involve traditionally under-represented populations in conservation across the state.