

## Maine Bay Management Pilot Projects Start

Aaron Porter, Ellsworth American, September 15, 2004

ELLSWORTH — One of the offspring of last year's Aquaculture Task Force is up and starting to walk. Next month, the state will look for two organizations and coastal areas to conduct pilot projects for bay management on the Maine coast.

Bay management is a concept that calls for the planning of a variety of uses in Maine's public coastal waters in an effort to present and resolve conflicts among users and to protect the coastal resources and communities.

The discussion about aquaculture conflicts led repeatedly to planning as a possible solution to conflicts between fish farmers, fishermen, yachtsmen, homeowners, tourists and others as the task force did its hurried work. However, there wasn't agreement among task force members as to just how a bay management strategy would work to solve aquaculture problems.

In the end, the task force recommended additional study of the topic.

The Legislature directed the Land and Water Resource Council, a group including all the state's natural resources commissioners, to oversee a bay management study. That order resulted in the formation of a steering committee, working under the council. Members include Paul Anderson, director of Maine Sea Grant; Kathleen Billings, chairman of the Soft Shell Clam Advisory Council; Heather Deese of the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance; John Dewitt, an environmental studies professor at Bowdoin; Evan Richert, former director of the State Planning Office; Jim Salisbury, former CEO of Supreme Alaska Seafoods; David Schamanska, St. George harbormaster, and Barbara Vickery of the Nature Conservancy.

According to David Etnier, deputy commissioner of Marine Resources, committee members were selected to avoid "people who had preconceived notions as to what bay management should be."

He said the committee will convene one of its first meetings on Sept. 21. Soon after a formal request for proposals will be published statewide. While the final language remains to be approved by the council, Etnier said the committee would lay out the tasks required to be performed by groups interested in the pilot program.

He said interested groups would have to show clearly how they would involve all parties interested in the management of an embayment in the pilot project. They also would need to identify pressures on the bay such as shoreside development, use conflicts and pollution.

Etnier said applications should include letters from major players and interested parties indicating their willingness to participate in the pilot program. A detailed budget indicating expenses for meetings, mapping, consultation and more also will be required.

Etnier stressed that the pilot programs are not intended to make decisions about the local areas they address. Rather, they should look to define a process and identify research, technical and scientific needs to aid in resolving use conflicts and improving local resource management.

Roger Fleming of the Conservation Law Foundation stressed the importance of adopting a local perspective in coastal management. He cited the recent Pew Ocean's report and U.S Commission on Ocean Policy recommendations to manage fish stocks with strong local input.

"I think this is tremendous," he said.

Fleming, who participated in task force discussions, said he was disturbed his foundation or a similar entity wasn't included on the steering committee.

"I hope that they do a good job in all our absence," he said.

As to what groups might apply for the pilot projects, Etnier said there could be new groups formed to answer the call or existing groups interested in water quality or bay use could step up.

"It's hopeful that whoever these groups are, they are already a group," Paul Anderson said. He cited the number of "friends of" groups that advocate for various water bodies along the coast as possible participants.

"Probably it's going to be proposals from people we already know," he said.

Etnier said there would be up to \$20,000 of state funding available to support each pilot project.

But there's more to it than the pilot projects.

Etnier said they would be going on in tandem with other information gathering by the steering committee and staff assisting them. He said those efforts will include examination of other bay management efforts world wide. In addition, the committee would seek information needed to inform a bay management process and possible changes to regulatory structures that currently define coastal uses.

Whatever the steering committee comes up with will have to be approved by the council before any proposed statutory changes even get near the legislature in 2007.

