# Frenchman Bay Partners Annual Meeting Minutes

### Saturday, May 21, 2016

### College of the Atlantic Gates Auditorium

## Attendees

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duncan Bailey  Ant Blasi  Jennifer Booher  Roger Bowen  Fiona de Koning  Andrea DeFrancesco  Jane Disney  Shep Erhart  Jennifer Fortier  Emma Fox  Beth Goettel  Michael Good  Robin Hadlock Seeley  Carol Korty  Brescian Lander  Robert Morefield  Chris Petersen  Margaret Snell  Terry Towne  Joanna Walls  Mark Whiting | MDI Biological Laboratory  Hancock County Commissioner & Hancock Point Kayak Tours  Gouldsboro Selectman  Acadia Aqua Farms  Ironbound Island Seaweed  MDI Biological Laboratory  Maine Coast Sea Vegetables  City of Ellsworth  UMaine  USFWS, Maine Coastal Islands NWR  Bar Harbor Oyster Collective  Shoals Marine Laboratory/Cornell University  Friends of Lamoine  Acadia Park Kayak Tours  MDI Biological Laboratory  College of the Atlantic  Maine Coast Heritage Trust  Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District |

## Introductions

Dr. Jane Disney (President of the Frenchman Bay Partners and Director of Education at the MDI Biological Laboratory) introduced the meeting and the Partners went around and did round-robin introductions. Two municipal liaisons attended, and there were several new faces in the room.

Jane gave an overview of the organization of the meeting, followed by a dedication to Emma Fox, former AmeriCorps and current Master’s Student in the Ecology and Environmental Science Program with the University of Maine School of Economics. Jane touched briefly on the pre-meeting survey about whether or not the Partners want to consider adding rockweed to the list of conservation targets. Not all Partners responded, but of those that did, the majority (18) of respondents agreed that rockweed should be added as a target, while 9 did not know or weren’t sure. Based on the majority response, the Frenchman Bay Partners will add rockweed as a conservation target, which includes going through the Conservation Action Planning process: identifying direct and indirect threats, as well as goals and strategies for achieving those goals for rockweed, and finally forming a rockweed committee.

## Project Updates: Conservation Targets and NEST Safe Beaches and Shellfish

Eelgrass: Jane updated the group about the eelgrass conservation target. Eelgrass is important habitat which serves as nursery grounds for juveniles of many different species, including lobsters and flounder. Eelgrass is a primary producer which performs many different ecosystem services, including stabilizing sediment and mitigating effects from wave action. Eelgrass also sequesters carbon and may help mitigate ocean acidification, making it an important resource in a changing climate. Threats to eelgrass include: pollution, erosion, unsustainable fishing practices, and invasive species.

Jane spoke about the progress in eelgrass restoration since the disappearance of eelgrass in Frenchman Bay a few years back. In the summer of 2013, Frenchman Bay lost most of its eelgrass, including areas informally designated as refugia. Eelgrass loss was observed all along the coast of Maine during that summer as well. In response to the disappearance of eelgrass in Maine, Duncan Bailey (Webmaster for the Community Environmental Health Laboratory at MDIBL) created eelgrassinmaine.org, an online citizen science database for eelgrass mapping. Later, eelgrassinmaine.org was absorbed into the larger [Anecdata.org](https://www.anecdata.org/projects/view/1), a portal for citizen science data of all kinds which continues to develop.

The Community Environmental Health Laboratory has a long history with eelgrass restoration, developing a series of restoration methodologies over the last ten years for use with volunteers in summertime restoration events. From wire grids to skewer staples, and more recently biodegradable grids, there have been many different strategies for restoration. In 2015, work with a group at Alfred University in New York included the development and deployment of ceramic disks in restoration. The restoration efforts using ceramic disks have the benefit of being able to withstand deployment at high tide: the weight of the disk carries the eelgrass down through the water column. Previous eelgrass restoration has been restricted to low tide. Jane mentioned that the Alfred University group is continuing to experiment with the disks until they are able to create something more biodegradable.

Diadromous Fishes: Chris Petersen (Vice President of the Frenchman Bay Partners and Professor of Marine Biology at College of the Atlantic) updated the Partners on the diadromous fishes conservation target. He spoke about the champions of diadromous fishes and the enormous help they are in achieving monitoring goals and conservation progress, including Down East Salmon Federation. Harvesters have also been key in conservation work. Multi-year harvester contracts allow researchers to connect with harvesters about data collection and monitoring. At Somes-Meynell on the day of the meeting, Chris and colleagues counted 500 fish migrating upstream, hoping for a seasonal total of 50,000. Last season saw 20,000 alewives. These fish are not currently being harvested. Other monitoring areas include Young’s Pond in Gouldsboro and Morancey Stream. Maine Coast Heritage Trust has been a key partner in all diadromous fish work, and have provided assistance in sharing data within Frenchman Bay and across other nearby bays.

*Coffee Break*

Mudflats: Dr. Bridie McGreavy (Secretary of the Frenchman Bay Partners and Assistant Professor of Environmental Communication at the University of Maine) gave an update about the progress toward mudflat conservation target goals: reopening 610 acres of mudflats closed to bacterial pollution in Frenchman Bay. Bridie talked about new proposed shellfish management system. Currently the state uses co-management between municipal ordinances (or regional ordinances, as in Frenchman Bay) and the Department of Marine Resources.

The 610 Project has made significant progress toward re-opening closed clamflats: 150 acres of flats have been opened so far, including flats in Weir Cove, Northeast Creek, and Kilkenney Cove. Communication has improved—we have focused on linking science with decision-making in Frenchman Bay, and have assisted in creating linkages across the state. The Partners have representation on several shellfish committees, including Gouldsboro, Frenchman Bay Regional, Bar Harbor, as well as the Shellfish Advisory Council. The Partners have also filled many capacity gaps and maintained continuity with various state agencies (which typically have high rates of staff turnover).

NEST Update: Emma Fox (Master’s Student at the University of Maine) gave an update on recent advancements by the New England Sustainability Consortium (NEST) Safe Beaches and Shellfish Project. As a part of her Master’s thesis work, Emma intends to compare preferences and support for coastal programs expressed by residents in Maine with preferences expressed by both residents in Frenchman Bay, and Frenchman Bay Partners. In 2015, the team at the UMaine School of Economics performed a survey with residents living in towns along Maine’s coastal zone, as well as a survey of Frenchman Bay Partners. There were similarities and differences between the two groups in terms of priorities for coastal zone managers, hypothetical coastal water quality program budget allocation, and sense of consequentiality of votes for or against such a program. Emma provided a brief (3 page) technical report on this work and intends to prepare a more comprehensive report to share on the Partners website.

## Conservation Action Planning (CAP) Review

Jane reviewed the Partners Conservation Action Planning process. The process is as follows: 1) identification of species of concern, 2) designate conservation targets, 3) identify threats to the conservation target, 4) brainstorm strategies to address the threats to each target, 5) set goals for each conservation target, and 6) implement strategies. Currently there are approximately 100 Partners, with a large group of potential Partners. Jane suggested that part of that broad involvement may be attributed to the fact that the Conservation Action Planning process which the Partners have adopted does not start with the identification of an issue, but rather focuses on specific habitats or species. While other conservation planning efforts often end at the planning stage, Conservation Action Planning is a cyclical, iterative, ongoing, and adaptive process. The Nature Conservancy recently released a newer version of the Action Planning Process, called Conservation by Design 2.0. Conservation by Design is a guidance document that emphasizes action based in evidence (rich, empirical information).

## “Quick and Dirty” CAP with Rockweed

We don’t have actual facts on how much money Maine is making a year off of rockweed, so we need to determine the exact economic input of rockweed in Maine. We also need to know how many tons are being harvested/year, and how harvesting patterns have changed in the past 20 years.

**Key Ecological Attributes**:

* 3D structure – “forest” places to hang
* Bird habitat/pelagic
* Nursery habitat
* Clump height and density
* Holdfast density
* Carbon sequestration
* Nutrient cycle
* Erosion/wave buffering
* Wrack dynamics
* Biomass and production

**Direct Threats to Rockweed**:

* Unsustainable fishing practices – legal, but unsustainable, as well as legal methods, both intentional and unintentional.
* Extreme weather
* Water temperature
* Climate change (Co2)
* Invasive species (?)
* Lack of monitoring/evaluation/law enforcement
* Methods of harvesting (holdfast removal)

**Indirect Threats**:

* Loss of other species. There are fishermen who are moving over to the harvesting of rockweed because their own fisheries are depleted.
* Also, because they being harvested, other species will suffer that are nursery species.
* Lack of biomass data
* Lack of training of harvesters

**The following Frenchman Bay Partners signed up for the Rockweed Committee**:

* Chris Petersen
* Hannah Webber
* Robin Hadlock Seeley
* Andrea DeFrancesco
* Shep Erhart
* Mark Whiting
* Emma Fox
* Possibly a CAP Facilitator

**Goals of the Rockweed Committee include**:

* Data-Access and availability
* Study and define growth rate. Strategy: citizen science
* Identify the extend/distribution of rockweed. Strategy: mapping
* Establish process for exploring options for conservation areas.
* Understanding rockweed communities and “baseline” conditions.