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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

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Coastal Community Planning Grants Awarded

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The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) announces the award of nearly \$250,000 to eleven projects along the length of the Maine coast. The funds from the DACF Maine Coastal Program are awarded through the DACF Municipal Planning Assistance Program. These awards will provide support for the coastal economy through implementation of projects that will increase public access to the coast, support shellfish harvesting, identify pollution sources that result in coastal beach closures, revitalize coastal downtowns, and identify key island transportation assets at risk from rising sea levels.

The grant program is an important element of the DACF Maine Coastal Program work plan, which includes regional and local elements administered through the DACF Municipal Planning Assistance Program. The funds are made possible through Maine's federal coastal zone management award from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). All of the projects include collaboration and partnerships and each grantee provides a minimum of 25% in matching funds or services.

Grants were awarded as follows:

1. City of Belfast: \$25,500 for Public Rangeway Management. The City of Belfast owns 17 documented public rangeways and rights-of-way in its urban area that allow public access to the coast. Many of them date back to the establishment of Belfast in 1768. Public access is at a premium along the Maine coast and, taken together, these public access points provide access to nearly 5.5 miles of coast. These funds will allow the city to develop management actions for each rangeway to insure continued public access, a critical element of both the town and regional economies.
2. Town of Brunswick: \$47,925 for Mare Brook Watershed Assessment and Community Engagement. Mare Brook runs through a highly developed residential portion of Brunswick, across Brunswick Landing (the former Brunswick Naval Air Station), and through public conservation land. It then empties into Harpswell Cove, one of the most important shellfish growing areas in the region and an area currently under consideration for the siting of a municipal intertidal aquaculture operation. As a result of non-point source pollution, Mare Brook has been designated an "urban impaired stream" and it has been shown to negatively

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impact the water quality and health of shellfish beds in Harpswell Cove. This project will improve understanding of the challenges facing the stream and develop recommendations for mitigating those challenges to improve water quality and protect the economic value of a shellfish growing area that produces 2,500 bushels of softshell clams annually.

3. Town of Chebeague Island: \$10,000 for Coastal Hazards and Adaptation Study. Chebeague Island is an unbridged island that relies on the municipally-owned Stone Pier as its primary ferry landing, and waterfront access point for local commercial fishermen, residents, visitors and recreational boaters. The economy of the island is reliant on the public pier to support local commerce and tourism. Built in the 19th century, the Stone Pier is experiencing increasingly severe impacts from coastal storms. The town will use these funds to determine the most cost-effective route forward - to move to an alternate landing site or to rebuild and expand the current facility at the Stone Pier.
4. Town of Cutler: \$25,500 for Cutler Harbor Public Access Point. These funds will be used to complete the construction of a floating dock system at the Cutler Harbor public access site. This is part of a larger harbor enhancement project to improve the overall accessibility and functionality of the site and to more fully realize the economic potential of the successful commercial fishing, shellfishing, aquaculture, seasonal sightseeing tour, nature cruise, and recreational boating businesses that rely on harbor access.
5. Hancock County Planning Commission: \$9,933 for Orland Waterfront Restoration Project. Downtown Orland's location along a tidal tributary of the Penobscot River and adjacent to the busy Route 1 corridor presents an opportunity to reinvigorate its downtown by capitalizing on its coastal identity. This project will assess current conditions in Orland village and changes to the Narramissic River brought about by the closure of Verso Paper; gather citizen input on improving economic opportunities in light of the mill closure; and identify actions that will improve growth and economic development in the waterfront village area.
6. Town of Islesboro: \$40,000 for Determining Vulnerability of Two Critical Locations to Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge. Using the most recent and detailed scientific data on storm surge and potential sea level rise, the Town will assess the vulnerability to flooding of two locations: 1) Grindle Point, the home of the Islesboro Ferry Terminal and 2) The Narrows, a narrow section of the island that separates the northern and southern sections of the town. This project will also produce a recommended set of adaptation actions to increase resilience of the infrastructure in these two locations.
7. Town of Ogunquit: \$28,599 for addressing Bacteria Contamination in the Ogunquit River Watershed. The nationally recognized beach communities of the Ogunquit River watershed attract over a million visitors each year, contributing over \$1.6 million to the local and regional economy. However, this area faces persistent bacteria contamination in the freshwater streams, estuaries, and at public beaches. Beach closures threaten the reputation of this area as a prime tourist destination and the associated economic benefits of the tourist economy. This project will expand water quality sampling and survey work currently being done in the town of Ogunquit to include all towns in the watershed. This will provide a more complete picture of the causes of the contamination and allow development of a plan of action for mitigating the problem.

8. Town of Rockport: \$11,236 for A Watershed Approach to Managing Land use Impacts to Coastal Waters. Elevated levels of enterococcus at Goodie's Beach in Rockport Harbor resulted in 42 beach closures during a 122-day period in 2014. Funding for this project will support additional water quality testing and analysis in the watershed of the Goose River, which empties into the harbor. Critical areas within the watershed that are contributing to excess nutrients and poor water quality will be identified and an actionable management information gathered so the impacts on Rockport Harbor can be reduced.
9. Washington County Council of Governments: \$8,400 for Washington County Rain Gauges and Shellfish Closure Outreach. Washington County supports a \$4,100,000 shellfish harvesting sector, but lacks the rain data required to make accurate rainfall closure decisions. This project will improve management of Washington County shellfish resources by providing more accurate information on which to make rain closures. WCCOG in partnership with the Department of Marine Resources will coordinate the installation of 10 new rain gauges that will provide real time rainfall data through the internet to DMR, will provide workshops and trainings on these devices and the data they generate, as well as other tools used to protect public health near areas with major shellfish resources.
10. Wells: \$5,200 for Wells Marsh Walk Project. With this funding, the town of Wells will complete surveying, engineering and design work for a 1,200-foot trail between Harbor Park and a viewing platform overlooking the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. This project is part of a nature-based tourism strategy for the Wells Harbor region.
11. Wiscasset: \$20,000 for Wiscasset Wastewater Treatment Plant Coastal Hazard Resilience Project. Previous studies have determined that the Wiscasset Wastewater Treatment Plant and Lower Water Street Pumping Station are at significant risk from sea level rise and a Category 1 hurricane. This project will produce an engineering report with recommendations on adaptation strategies, including costs to increase resilience and decrease the risk to this important piece of the town's infrastructure.

This is the sixth round of the Coastal Community Grant Program. Since 2012, 34 grants have been awarded for a total of \$1,000,000. More information on the grant program can be found at http://www.maine.gov/dacf/municipalplanning/financial_assistance.shtml.