

South Portland Stormwater Program Coordinator Meets with Maine's Congressional Delegation in DC

In early March, the City's Stormwater Program Coordinator Fred Dillon travelled to Washington, D.C. to meet with staff members for Representative Chellie Pingree, Senator Olympia Snowe and Senator Susan Collins. The meetings were arranged by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP), one of 28 National Estuary Programs nationwide, which engages in collaborative efforts with people and organizations interested in protecting and restoring coastal resources. CBEP partnerships include local, state and federal government organizations, non-profits, local businesses, citizens and universities, among others. The City of South Portland and CBEP have collaborated on a number of water quality improvement projects. Recent examples include a \$23,000 CBEP grant to the City for the creation of the soon-to-be-completed Stormwater Management Manual; the development of a water quality monitoring plan for the Long Creek Restoration Project; and the use of CBEP equipment for water quality monitoring in Trout Brook.

Each year CBEP travels to Washington to update Maine's elected representatives on the significant value the organization provides to its numerous project partners. CBEP projects typically result in a "multiplier effect" by leveraging up to \$10 from public and private interests for every \$1 invested by the organization. This year, Fred made the trip with CBEP Director Curtis Bohlen to affirm the many benefits the City has received through CBEP's project support. And since the discussions with congressional staffers included stormwater management considerations (as exemplified by the Long Creek Restoration Project), Fred also emphasized how the growing concern over the adverse impacts from polluted stormwater runoff is resulting in increased responsibilities and costs for municipalities. He further noted the critical importance of matching funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to municipalities in their collective efforts to improve water quality.

With threats of a federal government shutdown and proposals to substantially curtail the EPA's authority serving as a backdrop, the prospects for level funding to CBEP are uncertain. In all likelihood - and similar to all levels of government - CBEP will be asked to do more with less and hard choices will need to be made about which environmental resources are most deserving of protection.