

## How will CBEP Continue to Protect and Assess the Health of the Bay?

### Casco Bay Estuary Partnership's Commitment

The results of this *State of the Bay 2005* “checkup” are generally good—but keeping the bay on the path to improvement will require responsible stewardship from everyone who uses the resources of the bay and its watershed. The state, federal, local and citizen partners that make up the CBEP will continue to work towards realization of our goals for a healthy Casco Bay. We are committed to implementing the recommended actions in the *Casco Bay Plan* and to continuing our environmental monitoring program.



CBEP will continue to utilize new technologies and techniques as they evolve, in conjunction with the latest science, to make progress in our five priority areas. In addition, we recognize that new issues will come to light as our knowledge of the environment grows and will develop new indicators to track these as appropriate (see sidebar). We plan to hold periodic *State of the Bay* conferences and to produce future *State of the Bay* reports, which will track changes and improvements in the bay over time.

### New Indicators

The fourteen indicators presented in this report are helping CBEP to assess the health of Casco Bay and its watershed. In addition to this set of indicators, we are working on new indicators that will enhance our ability to assess the impacts of human uses on the bay's ecosystem. As data becomes available, we hope to develop indicators based on: the concentration of toxic chemicals in stormwater; loss of wetland acreage; the composition of the bottom-dwelling (benthic) animal community in the bay; and on non-native invading marine organisms.



*Invasive tunicate.*

### CBEP and Invasive Species

In August 2003, CBEP brought a team of scientists to marinas in Portland, South Portland and South Freeport to search for signs of invading marine organisms. These “invasive species” are marine animals and plants that are not native to Maine’s coast and which may spread into, or ‘invade,’ the existing ecosystem, overtaking native species and their habitat. The scientists were part of a team assembled by the northeast National Estuary Programs and MIT Sea Grant to search floating docks and piers in bays from New York Harbor to Maine. Among the non-native species encountered in Casco Bay were exotic species of tunicates, commonly known as sea squirts. These harmless looking organisms can potentially smother shellfish if they grow too abundantly. As a follow up to the field study, CBEP hosted *Maine’s Marine Invasion: A Forum on the Impact of Non-native and Other Invasive Species on Maine’s Coastal Ecosystems* in May, 2004. Currently, CBEP is working with a stakeholder committee to identify tools and resources that will help address the impacts of invasive species in Maine. As more information becomes available, CBEP will develop and indicator of the impact of invasive species.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize the following individuals for their invaluable assistance with data collection, writing, editing, images and GIS mapping for the State of the Bay 2005:

**Chief Editor:** Diane Gould, U.S. EPA

**Design:** Ed Geis, Headwaters Writing & Design

David Anderson, Portland Water District

Deborah Arbiq, CBEP

Chester Arnold, NEMO Program, University of Connecticut

Seth Barker, Maine DMR

Beverly Bayley-Smith, CBEP

Forrest Bell, PRW

Lamarr Cannon, Maine NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials)

Mary Cerullo, FOCB

Patrick Cloutier, South Portland Water Resource Protection

Matt Craig, CBEP

Fred Dillon, Presumpscot River Watch

Mike Doan, FOCB

Lee Doggett, Maine DEP

Kathi Earley, Portland Public Works Department

Stewart Fefer, U.S. F&WS, Gulf of Maine Program

Wendy Garland, DEP

Timothy Gato, South Portland Parks and Recreation

Scott Hall, National Audubon Society –Seabird Restoration Program

Steve Harmon, Maine DEP

Elizabeth Hertz, Maine Coastal Program, Maine State Planning Office

Anders Hopperstead, Mitchell Geographics, Inc.

Robert Houston, U.S. F&WS, Gulf of Maine Program

Todd Janeski, Maine Coastal Program, Maine State Planning Office

Stephen Kress, National Audubon Society–Seabird Restoration Program

Sandra Lary, U.S. F&WS, Gulf of Maine Program

P. Scott Libby, Battelle

Matt Liebman, U.S. EPA

Laura Livingston, Maine DMR

Betty McInnes, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District

Peter Milholland, FOCB

Ethan Nedeau, Biodiversity

Hilary Neckles, United States Geological Survey–Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Joe Payne, Friends of Casco Bay

Judith Pederson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sea Grant Center for Coastal Resources

Toni Pied, Maine Natural Areas Program

David Pineo, South Portland Water Resource Protection

Brad Roland, Portland Public Works Department

Colleen Ryan, Beginning with Habitat Program, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

David Santillo, Northern Ecological Associates, Inc.

Sue Schaller, Bar Mills Ecological

Vicki Schmidt, Maine DEP

Esperanza Stancioff, University of Maine Cooperative Extension and Maine Sea Grant

Jennifer Steffy, Portland Parks and Recreation

Susan Swanton, Maine Marine Trade Association

John True, Maine DEP

Jeff Varricchione, Maine DEP

Steve Walker, Town of Brunswick, Department of Planning and Development

Lois Winter, U.S. F&WS, Gulf of Maine Program

Karen Young, CBEP Director

Brenda Zollitsch, CBEP Intern

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We would also like to give special recognition to our Board members for their ongoing support:

Jacki Cohen, Citizen, Board Chair\*

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Patrick Cloutier, South Portland Water Resource Protection\*

Mel Cote, U.S. EPA\*

Jean Dyer, Casco Bay Island Development Association

Dusti Faucher, Friends of Presumpscot River

Stewart Fefer, U.S. F&WS, Gulf of Maine Program\*

Michael Feldman, New Meadows River Watershed Project\*

Ed Gilfillan, Citizen

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Caroline Kurrus, Freeport Conservation Commission

Kathleen Leyden, Maine Coastal Program, Maine State Planning Office

David Littell, Maine DEP

Betty McInnes, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District\*

Brooks More, City of Westbrook

Joe Payne, Friends of Casco Bay\*

Rick Seeley, Greater Portland Council of Governments

Phineas Sprague, Portland Yacht Services

Steve Timpano, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

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