



## Casco Bay and Its Watershed

The watershed of Casco Bay is some 986 square miles in area (about 899 square miles of land and 87 square miles of inland waters). It comprises approximately three percent of Maine's land area, but in 2000 it was home to about 17 percent of Maine's population, a proportion expected to have increased for the 2010 Census. Forty-two municipalities and four counties are partly or wholly within the watershed, including some of the state's largest and fastest growing towns. The area contains major lakes, including Sebago Lake, which is the state's second largest and the source of drinking water for many area residents. The watershed also contains several significant river systems, including the Presumpscot, Stroudwater, and Royal.



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# Letter from the Director

## How Is Casco Bay Doing?

That is probably the most common question I hear when someone learns where I work. I am never quite certain how to respond. While it is a simple question, there is no simple answer – certainly none that can be conveyed in a few seconds of polite conversation.

This report is an extended reply to that question. The answers here – as with most scientific answers – are limited and contingent. Limited because available information is always limited. Contingent because a reader's answers will depend on his or her interests (Migratory birds? Clam harvests?) and the baseline against which an individual compares current conditions (The 1600s? The 1960s?). Nonetheless, the 2010 *State of the Bay* report provides the most complete analysis we could assemble of the condition of Casco Bay and its watershed. The report is based on eighteen environmental indicators adopted by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership to assess the environmental condition of Casco Bay and its watershed.

In the following pages, good news coexists with less positive trends: evidence for the continued health of the Bay alternates with hints of problems ahead. The watershed is still largely forested. Developed lands and impervious surfaces, both of which are hard on aquatic ecosystems, still represent a relatively small proportion of the watershed. Thus the region's lakes, rivers and coastal waters remain generally healthy and support robust tourism, recreation, and resource-based industries.

But the population of the region continues to grow, and that growth is concentrated in peripheral communities that were sparsely populated and rural a generation ago. That pattern of settlement changes the character of rural communities, and strains municipal and state budgets. It also risks degrading many of the natural characteristics – abundant wildlife, clean waters, and beautiful scenery – that attracted many residents to the watershed in the first place.

Some ongoing problems – urban runoff, combined sewer overflows, clam flat closures – have been central to the mission of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership since its inception. Over the last decade, new issues have emerged. To address those, we have added new indicators to the fourteen addressed in the 2005 *State of the Bay* report: Contaminants of Emerging Concern; Invasive Species; and Climate Change. We have also added an indicator focused on Stormwater.

All of us at the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership look forward to your reactions to this report, as well as to new and continued collaboration with our partners on behalf of Casco Bay. Our collective challenge is to understand, strengthen, and protect the myriad ways that a healthy Casco Bay watershed contributes to the special sense of place that binds all those who live and work in this wonderful part of the world.

Sincerely yours,

Curtis C. Bohlen