



# *The Rip Tide*



**The Bi-monthly E-newsletter of the New Hampshire Coastal Program**

**March 2006**

■ N.H. Department of Environmental Services ■ 50 International Drive Suite 200 ■ Portsmouth, NH 03801 ■  
■ (603) 559-1500 ■ [www.des.nh.gov/coastal](http://www.des.nh.gov/coastal) ■

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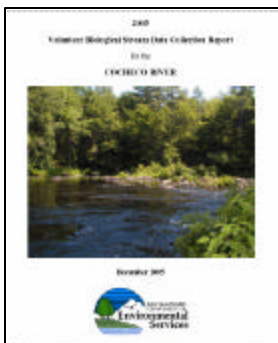
## NEW PUBLICATIONS & PLANNING TOOLS

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## NEWS

### ■ A Little CELCP from Our Friends ■

**By Cathy Coletti**

You don't have to take a cruise to get away from it all.

About a mile from downtown Portsmouth, the Sagamore Headlands property offers terrific views of Sagamore Creek both by land and water. Here, hikers, kayakers and bird enthusiasts find a place close to home to get away from life's daily demands.

Public access to this site would have been lost if it weren't for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) and some dedicated land protection partners. The property was on the market for condominium development in 2002 when project partner Trust for the Public Land stepped in to help negotiate a conservation purchase partially funded by CELCP.

Since 2002, nearly \$11 million CELCP dollars have helped protect over 2,800 acres of New Hampshire land critical to water quality protection, public recreational access, and wildlife habitat preservation in the 42 towns in the coastal watershed, or land that ultimately drains into our ocean. CELCP is a federal program administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and was established in 2002 by Senator Judd Gregg in coordination with land conservation experts. CELCP gives priority to coastal lands that can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological and public value. The program requires a one-to-one match from all applicants.

"CELCP is an incredibly important program to New Hampshire. There are few other funding opportunities to address the rapid loss of open space in our coastal watershed. Oftentimes land values make conservation impossible," said Ted Diers, Program Manager of the New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP).

The conversion of open space to development is happening disproportionately to those areas that are protected or remain open, tipping the balance and



**Kayaking is a popular activity at Sagamore Headlands in Portsmouth.**

causing communities to lose water supply protection and public access opportunities as well as landscapes that our Colonial forefathers experienced when they came to New England.

The Coastal Program, New Hampshire Estuaries Project, The Nature Conservancy and other project partners are currently working on a plan to identify those areas and strategies that are most important for conserving the resources in New Hampshire's coastal watershed. All states will be required to have such a plan to be eligible for CELCP funding in the future. New Hampshire's plan will include a summary of all known conservation plans that exist in the coastal watershed region and will cross-reference watershed-scale, regional and local priorities, encouraging groups to collaborate and look at local land protection goals in a regional context.

"New Hampshire's coastal watersheds harbor irreplaceable and increasingly at-risk wildlife habitat and water resources. We're very excited to be working on a regional plan that will help towns, public agencies, and local land trusts identify and conserve these vital natural features before it is too late," said Mark Zankel, deputy director for The Nature Conservancy-New Hampshire.

CELCP funds have been exclusively allocated through the congressional appropriations process. The newly released President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget allocates zero dollars to the CELCP program.

However, there is no indication that the pace of development in Rockingham and Strafford Counties will slow in the foreseeable future, according to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests report "New Hampshire's Changing Landscape: 2005."

"What is left to conserve is some of the most amazing natural resources in the state, and a draw that attracts both new residents and tourists. Our economic growth is predicated on people being attracted to the landscape. The New Hampshire advantage is not just low taxes but also clean water, scenic roads, and open spaces," said Diers.

For more information about the Coastal and Estuarine Conservation Plan and when the spring public input session will take place, contact Mark Zankel at The Nature Conservancy at (603) 224-5853 or [mzankel@tnc.org](mailto:mzankel@tnc.org).

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## ■ No Day at the Beach ■

### By Cathy Coletti

The work of Sara Sumner and Alicia Carlson is no day at the beach.

At this time of year, swimming in New England's oceans is reserved for those with wetsuits or members of the Polar Bear Club. But the staff at the DES Beach Program use the time to plan for another busy summer season.



**Beachgoers enjoying the sun and surf at Hampton Beach.**

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, Sumner and Carlson of the Beach Program, which like the Coastal Program, is part of the Watershed Management Bureau at the Department of Environmental Services, are the eagle eyes and ears for New Hampshire's beachgoers. Sumner and Carlson look for indicators of unsafe water at 15 public saltwater beaches.

Beach water monitoring helps identify actions needed to reduce pollution, while providing data to towns and states needed to issue warnings and closures if bacteria concentrations reach unsafe levels. The Beach Program is funded and authorized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and has received EPA funding since 2002. The program began testing saltwater beaches in 1996, and has grown to include two full-time staff members and one seasonal intern.

Bacteria-laden waste from failing septic systems, boat sewage and runoff of pet and wildlife feces all contribute to potentially risky pollution in our coastal waters. A beach advisory is issued when samples at a saltwater beach exceed the state standard of Enterococci bacteria, a type of fecal bacteria that indicates the presence of other pathogens, or disease causing organisms, that can transmit illnesses like gastroenteritis and cholera to humans.

When bacteria levels exceed the state water quality standards for beaches, Sumner and Carlson notify the beach owner, and an advisory must be posted to warn the public of the health risks of swimming in contaminated waters.

"The beach owner must post our advisory and has the option to close the beach. An advisory warns the public to refrain from water contact activities, while a closure closes the beach to the public," said Sumner.

Although Beach Program staff ultimately has the authority to close beaches, they leave the decision up to the beach owner. No coastal beach closures have been issued in the history of the Beach Program. The reasoning is that people can still recreate without entering the water by sunbathing, picnicking, and doing other activities, said Sumner.

Last summer, only one beach, Seabrook Harbor Beach, was posted for an advisory.

During the upcoming beach season, Sumner and Carlson will test Seabrook Harbor Beach, Hampton Beach, North Hampton State Beach, New Castle Town Beach, Sawyer Beach and Cable Beach (both in Rye) twice a week. These beaches are on Sumner and Carlson's radar because they have been placed in the impaired category for people who have direct contact with the water. Sumner and Carlson develop a water sampling plan by assessing the potential threat to public health at each beach. Beaches are placed into one of three water sampling categories based on water quality data, watershed characteristics, and other criteria, like the importance of the beach to the local economy.

This winter, EPA announced another \$10 million nationally in grants for use by coastal states and territories for beach water quality monitoring and notification programs. The New Hampshire Beach Program is slated to receive approximately \$200,000 for beach program monitoring and notification for use during the 2007 and 2008 beach seasons.

The Beach Program is expanding. For instance this upcoming season, Sumner hopes to do more monitoring during rainy days. On rainy days, water quality is at its poorest because any waste from outlying areas washes into the nearest water body, including places where people swim, surf and harvest shellfish.

Sumner and Carlson said other future plans for the Beach Program include more outreach and education to beachgoers. This summer, signs prompting people to pick up after their pets' waste will appear at several beaches. Although pets aren't allowed on New

Hampshire's state-owned beaches, pet waste remains a problem.

Signs will also be placed on most beaches reminding people to dispose of their cigarette butts in receptacles, not the sand. Cigarette butts remain the most collected item on beach cleanups. The Beach Program will also purchase cigarette butt receptacles for placement along Hampton Beach. On any given summer day, the town of Hampton hosts between 60,000-100,000 visitors, many of whom go to the beach, according to the town of Hampton.

Both the Beach Program and Coastal Program assist the Blue Ocean Society with their Adopt-A-Beach Program. The Beach Program provides some supplies and staff assistance at the Hampton Beach site. Coastal Program funds enable the Adopt-A-Beach Program at Hampton and eight other sites (more are in need of adoption).

Another idea in the works is a Beach Recognition program to acknowledge beaches with sound management activities and good water quality. One challenge is implementing a recycling program at Jenness State Beach. Last year, many beachgoers mistook the bins for regular trash receptacles, and the bins filled within hours. In New Hampshire, beach owners have a choice to provide trash receptacles or have a "carry in carry out" policy.

The BEACH Act of 2000 requires coastal states and territories to adopt up-to-date pathogen criteria to protect beachgoers from harmful bacteria. Information about EPA's Beach Program can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/beaches/>

The Public Beach Inspection Program is responsible for monitoring all public beaches in the state. Learn more at: <http://www.des.nh.gov/Beaches/>

For information about New Hampshire-owned beaches, visit <http://www.nhparks.state.nh.us/ParksPages/beaches/Home.html>

## Revised Rules Focus on Public Health and Safety

In late January, revised rules were adopted pertaining to designated beaches. In short, a designated beach is defined as a public bathing place intended or used for bathing, swimming, or other primary water contact purposes, including pools and spas. However, the term designated beach does not include any area that serves three or fewer living units and is used only by the residents of the living units and their guests.

The designated beach area rules are revisited every seven years. The DES Legal Unit does the majority of the revisions, working in concert with program staff.

Prior to this year's revision, the rules had no provisions for safety at public beaches. The new rules specify that if rescue equipment is not provided, a sign be posted to notify the public that the rescue equipment is not available.

"This is something designed to not only protect public safety but to help beach owners avoid liability issues," said Sara Sumner, Beach Program Coordinator.

Additionally, the revised rules state that emergency communication devices be located within 200 feet of the beach, and if this

communication device is not present, a sign be posted to notify the public of the location of the nearest communication device.

In addition, the revised rules state that toilet facilities be installed at the owner's discretion, but are not required. If toilet facilities are present, they should meet the requirements, including safeguards to prevent portable toilets from being tipped over, which is a big issue, according to Sumner, and keeping toilet discharges from reaching the beach. In the event that toilets are available, they should be in walking distance from the public beach, and trash receptacles must be included inside.



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## ■ Many Great Places to see bald eagles on Seacoast ■

**By Dave Kellam**  
**N.H. Estuaries Project**

*Published in the Portsmouth Herald on February 15, 2006*

"Look, up in the sky, it's a bird, it's a plane, no, it's a bird - a really big bird!"

Seeing a bald eagle in flight can be a jarring experience, because they are so much bigger than many other birds in the sky. They actually seem like a surreal computer-generated creature that you might see in a Hollywood movie.

But these magnificent birds are real and are flying in the Seacoast skies right now. Winter is a great time to see bald eagles because as lakes and rivers freeze in the North, they congregate around areas of open water, like Great Bay.



**Bald eagles have been seen this winter on Great Bay.**

Laura Deming, a state Audubon senior wildlife biologist, said Great Bay is currently the winter home of a small group of eagles.

"There seem to be at least five eagles that have established themselves at Great Bay this winter," she said. "We have a great group of volunteers who have monitored eagle activity on the bay for a long time, and they report that the number of Great Bay eagles is down since past years. This is due to an unseasonably warm winter and more open water in the region. The regional eagle population does not appear to be smaller, just more spread out."

The lack of ice in Great Bay seems to help eagle watching at Sandy Point Discovery Center. Kelle McKenzie, center director, said eagles have been closer to shore this year, foraging for food on the exposed mud flats. "A couple weeks ago we saw four eagles, one adult and three immatures, feeding on the carcass of a gull near the center," McKenzie said. "We have also seen a few confrontations between crows and eagles over food on the shore. Needless to say, the eagles get the right of way."

There are two very good public access spots around Great Bay to look for eagles. Although the buildings

are closed for the winter, the property around Sandy Point Discovery Center on Depot Road in Stratham provides excellent views of the Bay with good parking and an elevated boardwalk. Adam's Point in Durham also provides a good vantage point to scan the northern part of Great Bay and of the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge, where eagles often roost at night.

Great Bay, the state's largest estuary, covers an area of approximately 17 square miles, with 144 miles of shoreline made up of steep wooded banks, rocky outcroppings, shale beaches and beautiful salt marshes. Protection and enhancement of the Great Bay Estuary, as well as the Hampton-Seabrook Estuary, are primary goals of the New Hampshire Estuaries Project.

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project is a collaborative program involving governmental agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, businesses and the public to protect, enhance and monitor the environmental quality of the state's coastal bays and rivers. Go to [www.nhep.unh.edu](http://www.nhep.unh.edu) for more information.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ■ Coastal Program Funding About Level with Last Year ■

The Coastal Program will receive approximately \$1,138,000 in total program funding designated under the Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Federal Fiscal Year 2006. The funding is level with last year. Please see the below chart for a programmatic breakdown.

Year	Program administration, Pass-through grant program	Restoration Program	Nonpoint Source Pollution Program	Total
2005	\$946,000	\$83,000	\$94,000	\$1,123,000
2006	\$972,000	\$83,000	\$83,000	\$1,138,000

On the national level, the appropriations bill allocated approximately \$67 million for the Coastal Zone Management Act grants, which is level with fiscal year 2005 funding. The Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program was again funded at federal fiscal year 2005 levels of about \$3 million; this is less than the \$10 million funding level in fiscal year 2004, but more than the Administration's request of zero dollars.

In early February, the President released his budget for federal fiscal year 2007. The budget provides \$3.68 billion for the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, a decrease of \$220 million from the level enacted in fiscal year 2006. Of note, the Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Program and Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program levels are zero funded.



## ■ EPA Grant Opportunity for Workshops and Conferences ■

The Environmental Protection Agency is soliciting applications from eligible applicants for the planning, arranging, administering, and conducting of conferences in the areas of (1) EPA mission related issues connected to protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment; (2) advancing the scientific and technical research that promotes environmental protection; (3) exploring current and emerging issues of importance to environmental protection; and/or (4) encouraging collaboration among the nation's best scientists

and engineers in academia, business and nonprofit research institutes. States, territories and possessions, public and private universities and colleges, hospitals, laboratories, local governments, and other public or private nonprofit institutions are eligible to apply.

The EPA will make funding decisions on a quarterly basis beginning approximately April 18, 2006, and approximately every three months thereafter (the next funding decisions will be approximately on July 17, 2006, October 16, 2006, and January 16, 2007.) However, in order for a proposal to be considered for funding, it must be received by EPA no later than three months prior to the start of the conference for which the applicant is requesting funding.

Grants are for meeting and workshop support up to \$25,000 per agreement. This category is for the major support of small-scale, focused meetings and workshops on a specific subject or subjects, or for partial support of a larger conference. Large conference support up to \$75,000 per agreement is also available. This category is for major support of broader conferences that include a wide range of subjects relating to environmental research. EPA will not consider applications for less than \$5,000. Cost-sharing is not required.

For more application and eligibility details, visit:

[http://www.epa.gov/ord/grants\\_funding/pdfs/BAA\\_conferences\\_011706.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/ord/grants_funding/pdfs/BAA_conferences_011706.pdf)

## ■ Discussion List Connects Local Coastal Decision Makers ■

Many coastal decision makers are concerned about intense development pressure and how it will affect the quality of life of current and future Seacoast residents. The UNH Carsey Institute and NH GRANIT have started a discussion list, or listserv, on issues specific to growth and development in the Seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine. Suggestions, best practices, and questions to initiate discussion will be posted.

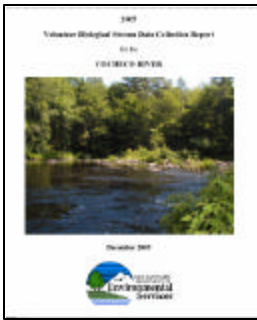
The listserv was created in response to feedback received from participants of the November 2005 Changing Face of the Seacoast Forum, partially funded by the Coastal Program. The listserv differs from Plan-Link in that discussion will focus exclusively on the Seacoast region, including southern Maine.

ccoletti  
NEWS



## NEW PUBLICATIONS & PLANNING TOOLS

### ■ Volunteer Biological Stream Data Collection Report for the Cocheco River ■



This report describes the results and methodology of a pilot project where volunteers sampled macroinvertebrates, or living organisms that can be seen with the naked eye, as an indicator of water quality.

The Cocheco River Watershed Coalition in cooperation with the DES Coastal and Biomonitoring Programs launched this project during the summer/fall of 2005 at sites along the Cocheco River and its tributaries. To read the report, visit [http://www.des.nh.gov/wmb/pdf/report3\\_20060118.pdf](http://www.des.nh.gov/wmb/pdf/report3_20060118.pdf)

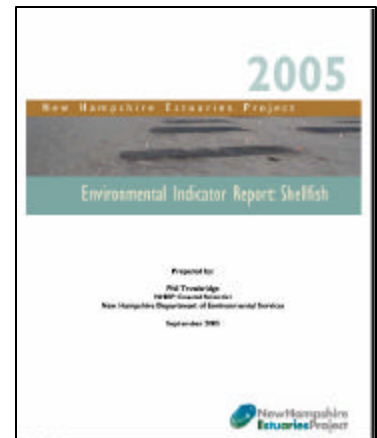
### ■ Shellfish Spotlight ■

Shellfish Spotlight is an engaging publication by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project illustrating the importance of shellfish to human health in New Hampshire. It also gives updates on the status of local shellfish populations and research. Go to [http://www.nhep.unh.edu/resources/pdf/shellfish\\_spotlight-nhep-05.pdf](http://www.nhep.unh.edu/resources/pdf/shellfish_spotlight-nhep-05.pdf) to download a copy.

### ■ 2005 Environmental Indicator Report: Shellfish ■

According to this report published by the New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP), both the oyster and clam populations in New Hampshire are at or are approaching their lowest values in the historical record.

Every three years, NHEP prepares a State of the Estuaries report with information on the status and trends of a select group of environmental indicators from the coastal watershed and estuaries. Prior to developing each State of the Estuaries report, the NHEP publishes four technical data reports that illustrate the status and trends of the complete collection of indicators tracked by the NHEP. This report is a detailed account of shellfish indicators and includes information like estimates of the total number of harvestable oysters in Great Bay and estimated densities of harvestable clams and oysters. To view the report, go to: <http://www.nhep.unh.edu/resources/pdf/env-ind-shellfish-nhep-05.pdf>



### ■ Eelgrass Restoration Site Selection Model CD-ROM ■

Fred Short and Dave Burdick of the Jackson Estuarine Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, developed this model to assist site selection for eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) restoration. The model uses previously collected data on bathymetry, sediment type, water quality, wave exposure, and past and present eelgrass distribution to prioritize potential restoration sites.

This tool is now available at no cost on CD-ROM. Distribution of the CD-ROMs is made possible by a grant from The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology. For copies of the CD

