

Chapter 4 - Marine Resources Policies and Strategies

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan's Marine Policies and Strategies describe goals, policies, standards, and implementation strategies related to marine resources and the waterfront environment.

The marine environment of Wells covers most of the eastern portion of the Town extending inland as far as Route 1 and stretching along the Atlantic Ocean for over five miles from Kennebunk on the north to Ogunquit on the south. The majority of the oceanfront is characterized by a system of barrier sand dunes and beaches. Behind this dune system lies an extensive area of marshland fed by the Little River, Merrilland River, Webhannet River, Ogunquit River, and numerous coastal streams. The water, plant and wildlife resources of this area are discussed in detail in the Natural Resources Policies and Strategies.

Goals

State Goal:

Protect the State's marine resources industry, ports, and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public. (Growth Management Act)

Relevant State Coastal Policies:

1. Promote the maintenance, development, and re-vitalization of the State's ports and harbors for fishing, transportation, and recreation. (Coastal Management Policy)
2. Enhance the economic value of the State's renewable marine resources. (Coastal Management Policy)
3. Support shoreline management that gives preference to water-dependent uses over other uses, that promotes public access to the shoreline and that considers the cumulative effects of development on coastal resources. (Coastal Management Policy)

Regional Goal:

Partner with state and federal agencies and neighboring communities, and other key regional partners, to implement timely dredging and beneficial reuse of dredged material to support coastal resilience and beach nourishment. (None specific to marine resources.)

Wells Goals:

1. Continue to assure public access to the beaches and Harbor in Wells while managing and maintaining these resources in the best interests of the community and adjacent landowners.

2. Work cooperatively with the State to manage and regulate the use of critical sand dune areas.
3. Assure the Wells Harbor remains a viable resource since the harbor plays an important role as both an economic and recreational resource for the Town.
4. Protect and restore recreational fishing and shellfishing in the Town's coastal waters and estuaries.

Note: The following suggestion was made by citizens through public outreach:

- 4.5. Prepare and plan for the inevitable impacts of climate change on Wells's marine resources through specific measures such as seawall improvements, limiting coastal development, higher boardwalks and piers, and revegetating shorelines.

Policies

To achieve these goals, it is the policy of the Town of Wells to:

1. Continue to assure the quality of the living environment in beach neighborhoods by managing the activities of beach goers, enforcing private property rights, and controlling access and parking.
2. Manage the beaches in cooperation with private landowners to ensure this resource can be used in a manner that allows for maximum use by the beach goers while minimizing the impact to private property owners and protecting the natural plant and wildlife habitats that enhance the value of the beach.
3. Protect the plant and wildlife habitat associated with the beach/dune and estuarine systems to ensure survival of the state's endangered and threatened species.
4. Support the dredging of the harbor to maintain it as a suitable mooring area while minimizing the negative ecological impacts of dredging on recreational fishing and shellfishing opportunities.
5. Control parking and support facilities in the harbor and beach areas to allow continued use of the area for commercial and recreational boating and marine uses.

Note: We recommend considering the following two policies. State or Federal Clean marine/boatyard programs, such as the Maine Pumpout Grant Program, can help prevent pollution from entering the Wells Harbor in the Webhannet Estuary. Improving marine habitat and water quality will help achieve the goals of supporting and restoring shellfishing (recreationally and/or commercially).

6. Encourage owners of marine businesses and industries to participate in state or federal clean marine/boatyard programs.
- ~~6.7.~~ Protect, maintain, and, where warranted, improve marine habitat and water quality.

Standards

To achieve these policies, the following are Town of Wells' standards to guide development:

1. Existing Land Use ordinance.

Implementation Strategies

1. Revisit and update as necessary the local 2013 Harbor Management Plan that addresses harbor location and use issues, jetty issues, marine resource protection, adjacent land use and public access. The updated plan should be submitted to the Maine State Planning Office for approval and become a part of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Maintain the graphic inventory of all sand dunes on the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) and update, as new data becomes available. Ensure that any landowner with property on sand dunes obtain any necessary state permits prior to obtaining any local permits.
3. Continue to work with appropriate state agencies and the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve to manage point and non-point source pollution into the harbor and estuary to ensure appropriate water quality levels for shellfish harvesting and other marine recreation activities.
4. Maintain public access to the beaches, harbor and waterfront of Wells.

Note: The following suggestions were made by citizens through public outreach:

4.5. Public access to beaches should be carefully addressed to limit overcrowding of natural resources while also improve access points through ensure safety of stairs, making more handicap options, creating better bike access to beaches, better shuttling access to beaches, transportation for seniors to beaches, resident parking for beaches, and better sidewalks (such as on Mile Rd). Note: Many residents noted they would like to see public access and new recreation infrastructure limited.

6. Reduce pollution impacting marine resources.

5. Limit coastal development and building.

7. Establish guidelines for beach use for tourists, promote/enforce rules, monitor beaches.

8. Improve water-based recreational businesses and improve kayak access and public boat launches. Promote inland based water recreation activities to tourists as an alternative to the beach.

6.9. Continue to maintain Wells Harbor as an active harbor that provides access, service and mooring facilities for both commercial, marine-related vessels and recreational boats.

Note: We recommend removing this Implementation Strategy as the Wells Bay Regional Beach Management Plan is no longer current or widely available.

7. Review and implement the Wells Bay Regional Beach Management Plan.

8.10. Continue to work with the Department of Marine Resources and the DEP to ensure the viability of the recreational shellfish-harvesting program and prohibit any commercial harvesting.

Note: The following two strategies are identified in the Comp Plan Review Criteria Rule (Chapter 208) and we recommend considering them.

11. Continue to work with local property owners, land trusts, and others to protect major points of physical, accessible, and visual access to coastal waters, especially along public ways and in public parks.

9.12. Provide information about the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program and current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.