

York River Study Committee

Draft Management Plan Objectives and Actions Developed from Watershed Resource Topic Meetings

October 2017

The York River Study Committee continues to gather and review information to characterize and assess watershed resources and develop actions or recommendations for a watershed management plan that provides a vision and plan for long-term protection of watershed resources. The committee has convened meetings to discuss watershed topics of interest, and in some cases, has developed draft management objectives and actions related to those topics. Topics fall under three major categories: natural resources; economic resources and community character; and cultural and historic resources. Topics for which management objectives and actions are still being developed are noted under each resource heading.

Feedback on the draft objectives and actions developed to date is welcomed. Comments can be sent to York River Study Coordinator Jennifer Hunter (jh.yorkriver@gmail.com or 207-641-9122). Participation at future resource topic meetings or management plan development meetings and workshops is encouraged. Meetings are posted on the York River Study website calendar: www.yorkrivermaine.org.

Natural Resources

This section eventually will include the following topics, in addition to the three topics underlined below:

- fish and fish habitat
- endangered and threatened species / species of greatest conservation need
- other key habitats and natural communities
- drinking water supplies
- conservation lands and unfragmented habitat blocks
- habitat connectivity and resiliency

SALT MARSH HABITAT

Protect existing high quality salt marsh habitats, and enhance or restore salt marsh habitats to improve ecological functions.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include improving tidal flows with culvert replacements; invasive species monitoring and control; stormwater management recommendations; improved buffer management]

Evaluate climate change impacts on salt marsh habitat.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include evaluating impacts from sea level rise and storm surge, warmer temperatures, intense storms/flows, and increasing macroalgae]

Protect marsh migration corridors to support future salt marsh areas.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include additional mapping and analysis; re-sizing culverts; identifying land conservation priorities; applying tidal shoreline regulations to future tidal wetlands areas]

WATER QUALITY

Meet Maine DMR Shellfish Program water quality standards for York River shellfish growing areas.

Develop and implement long-term monitoring programs to assess water quality.

- Evaluate nutrient levels and nutrient-related impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats in the York River watershed.
- Develop and implement plans to address changes to water quality or known problem areas.

Prevent and reduce nonpoint source pollution inputs to watershed streams and rivers.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could address sediments, nutrients, toxins, etc. and could cover landowner behavior/stewardship actions, regulatory changes (e.g., site plan and development regulations, septic system siting, etc.), stormwater management practices, minimizing impervious surfaces, etc.]

Protect and maintain natural vegetated buffers around all water resources.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include ordinance recommendations for vegetated buffers and setbacks, landowner education, restoration of degraded shorelines, etc.]

INFRASTRUCTURE AND AQUATIC ORGANISM PASSAGE

Improve conditions for aquatic organism passage and tidal flow at road-stream crossings and other man-made structures.

- Using road-stream crossing data on the Maine Stream Habitat Viewer with habitat data, towns' and MDOT's workplans, and towns' needs, identify road-stream crossings that are potential barriers or barriers to flow and aquatic organism passage and prioritize for replacement.
- In coordination with the watershed towns and MDOT, integrate tidal flow considerations into road-stream crossing designs.
- Integrate climate change predictions into infrastructure designs including sea level rise scenarios and increased freshwater flow from stronger precipitation events.
- Identify locations of privately-owned passage barriers and explore options for restoring fish passage and natural stream or tidal flow, where possible.

Economic Resources and Community Character

This section eventually will include the following topics, in addition to the two topics underlined below:

- scenic resources/open spaces
- other recreation
- working farms and forests

WORKING HARBOR

Promote and sustain activities that support commercial fishing operations and an active working waterfront.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include maintenance dredging; encourage permanent commercial and public access (commercial docks, moorings, launch sites) and associated infrastructure; evaluating sea level rise/climate change impacts to working waterfront, etc.]

TIDAL WATER RECREATION

Evaluate the extent of recreational boat use and impacts to coastal resources.

[actions to be developed in support of this objective could include evaluations of extent and location of users; access points/parking; impacts to mudflats, marsh grass, wildlife; impacts of docks (including new or expansion of existing) on natural resources, etc.]

Encourage sustainable recreational uses and foster user stewardship of natural resources.

[actions to be developed, in coordination with the Town of York and Harbor Board, could include instituting additional boater education opportunities related to safety, access points, and to minimize resource impacts; developing ramp/dockside education programs on responsible boating practices; reviewing or changing boat speed/no wake zones; exploring sustainable options for paddle craft launch sites and facilities, etc.]

Cultural and Historic Resources

Increase awareness and appreciation of watershed history.

- Educate public that historic preservation is culturally and financially beneficial and worthwhile.
- Improve understanding and coordination of activities under the National Historic Preservation Act and Maine's preservation laws.
- Integrate/append management goals to town comprehensive plans.

Recognize cultural resources and historic places.

- Identify and document watershed archaeological, architectural, and historic resources.
- Increase ability to respond to emergencies affecting cultural resources.
- Improve towns' abilities to identify and protect historic resources through local regulatory processes.

Share information on historic resources.

- Develop an easily accessible public interface for research, and for the graphic representation of the watershed's historic resources.
- Collaborate with educators in developing lesson plans and school programs that incorporate preservation and archaeology; provide technical assistance and outreach materials.
- Facilitate research and exchange of historic preservation information.

Promote stewardship of historic resources.

- Raise the profile of historic preservation through stewardship of historic resources.
- Undertake new research and scholarship at historic sites to improve our understanding of the significance of the archaeological and historic resources in the watershed.
- Involve public in research and encourage citizen science.