

Changes at Friends of Casco Bay

After nearly 24 years as Casco BAYKEEPER®, Joe Payne retired in early 2015.

The retirement party Friends of Casco Bay hosted for Joe was a testament to all he has helped our organization accomplish. More than 230 friends cheered as Joe was presented with numerous awards, including recognition from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and Maine Department of Environmental Protection; he was even presented with a Key to the City of Portland.

The Emeritus Fund for Advocacy, established in Joe's honor, continues to recognize his contributions to Casco Bay.

"Protecting the Bay has been about the work, but more than that it's been about the people I have met along the way. Twenty-four years ago, I wasn't exactly sure what I was getting into. What I found out was that there are plenty of us who care about this community and want to do our part to ensure that the Bay is passed on to the next generation better than we found it.

"By working together, we as a community have built a strong organization dedicated to protecting the health of our waters. Thanks to our volunteers, supporters, and staff, I can say that our waters are healthier and better protected than they were two and a half decades ago. Unfortunately, the job isn't done—there are problems that are going to take all of our work and support to solve."

Joseph E. Payne

Joseph E. Payne
Casco Baykeeper, Emeritus



Photo: Dennis Welsh

Until a new Casco Baykeeper is hired...

"The Board of Friends of Casco Bay has appointed me as Interim Casco Baykeeper so that we continue to have an identified person with whom the public can connect with any concerns about the Bay, as required by our Waterkeeper Alliance license.

"What happens now?" you may be asking. There will be no 'replacing Joe' or 'filling his shoes.' When Joe started working for Friends in 1991, he was the first staff person. Now Friends of Casco Bay is a stable organization with eight full-time staff members working with our community to take care of a Bay that belongs to all of us.

"We have officially launched the search for the next Waterkeeper who will serve as the eyes, ears, and voice of the Bay."

Cathy Ramsdell

Cathy L. Ramsdell, CPA, CGMA
Executive Director/Casco Baykeeper pro tem



Friends of Casco Bay
Casco BAYKEEPER

43 Slocum Drive
South Portland, Maine 04106

Non-Profit
Organization
PAID
Portland, ME
Permit No. 510

www.cascobay.org

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead



Research Vessel Joseph E. Payne, named in honor of our first Casco Baykeeper, at Portland Head Light



Friends of Casco Bay
Casco BAYKEEPER

Report to the Community

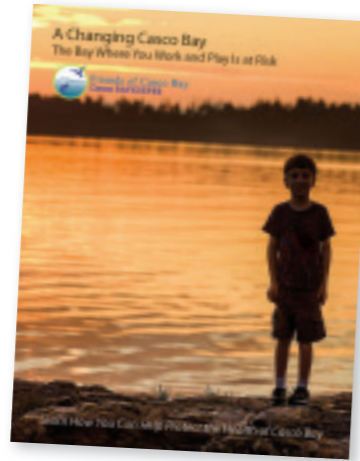
Casco Bay is changing.

Releasing *A Changing Casco Bay* report

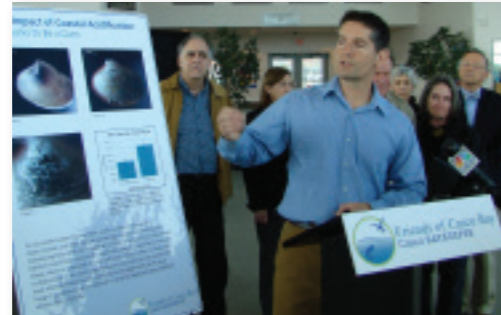
Friends of Casco Bay recently released a major report that answers the question, “How healthy is Casco Bay?” *A Changing Casco Bay* is based on 23 years of data and observations on the environmental health of Casco Bay. The report highlights changes we see happening in the Bay and suggests what we can all do to protect its health.

Casco Bay, though still a vital ecosystem, is changing more rapidly than anyone expected. Nitrogen pollution—from fertilizers, rainwater runoff, sewage, and air pollutants—is leading to Coastal Acidification, threatening the health of Maine’s second most valuable fishery, softshell clams.

Curtis Bohlen, Executive Director, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, commented, “*A Changing Casco Bay* is a unique blend of baywide perspective with a deep understanding of local effects. The report links regional trends to local conditions. This really helps personalize the issues and points toward everyday actions we can all take to benefit the Bay.”



Executive Director/Casco Baykeeper *pro tem* Cathy Ramsdell and Research Associate Mike Doan explain our research findings at a media conference to release *A Changing Casco Bay*.



A 25th Anniversary cake helped lighten the mood after “Casco Bay Is at Risk.”

Keeping the health of Casco Bay in the public eye

As our organization approached its 25th anniversary, Friends of Casco Bay hosted *Casco Bay Is at Risk*, a community forum focused on our concerns regarding the future of our coastal waters. A panel of experts offered the latest information behind the headlines about acidifying coastlines, dwindling clam populations, invading green crabs, and disappearing eelgrass—the nursery of the sea.

More than 300 community members attended. After hearing some discouraging statistics from scientists and harvesters, participants were buoyed by a list of positive actions they can take to help turn the tide. See *How You Can Make a Difference in the Health of Casco Bay* at cascobay.org/BayPapers.



Continuing clam flat research

To determine if acidic mud in Casco Bay can impact the growth of shellfish, we placed juvenile clams in the sediment on a clam flat in Freeport where we had previously measured high acidity levels. It was bad news for the clams! After just one week in the mud, their shells became pitted, as their shells began to dissolve. This reinforced our previous research on 30 clam flats around Casco Bay, which suggested that the more acidic the clam flat, the less hospitable it is for clams.

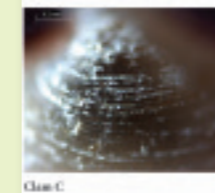
Clam “condos” exposed juvenile clams to acidic mud.



Clam A



Clam B



Clam C

Clam shells show damage after just one week in acidic mud.

Sounding the alarm on acidification

The ocean absorbs up to a third of the carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels. Water and carbon dioxide (CO₂) mix to form carbonic acid, which makes seawater more acidic—*Ocean Acidification*. Our research has added to evidence that nitrogen from land-based sources exacerbates the problem. Nitrogen-laden fertilizers, sewage overflows, and pet waste are flushed into nearshore waters, promoting algae blooms. When these plants die and decay, CO₂ is released—*Coastal Acidification*.

We have worked not only with the citizens of Maine on this issue but also with their elected representatives. Our members helped to convince the Maine Legislature to pass a bill to establish a state Ocean Acidification Commission, the first on the East Coast. Joe Payne was one of the earliest voices in Maine on this issue; appropriately, one of his final tasks as Casco Baykeeper was serving on this 16-member commission. The Commission completed its work on schedule, in six months, issuing a report that calls for more data collection, more public education, and reducing nitrogen pollution. Executive Director Cathy Ramsdell testified before the Legislature in early 2015 in favor of a bill to form an Ocean Acidification Council to further efforts to tackle this problem.



Cleaning up stormwater pollution has been a priority of Friends of Casco Bay for over 25 years.

Reducing pollution by passing effective local and statewide laws

We helped pass two groundbreaking ordinances in Portland to reduce litter and waste in our waters. For nearly two years, Cathy Ramsdell served on Portland’s Green Packaging Taskforce to explore ways the city could reduce litter and waste—much of which finds its way into the Bay. The Taskforce’s work resulted in an ordinance to reduce shopping bag waste by putting a 5 cent fee on plastic and paper shopping bags and an ordinance banning polystyrene packaging (e.g. Styrofoam). Both ordinances have become models for other Maine communities committed to reducing waste.

We also worked with Portland officials to help create a Stormwater Service Utility Fee. The fee spreads the cost of upgrading our sewer systems and stormwater protections more equitably.

At the state level, we worked with industry *and* environmental groups to pass a law phasing out microbeads—tiny pieces of plastic used in personal care products—which pass through our water treatment plants, end up in our waters, and can be ingested by shellfish and by the people who eat them.

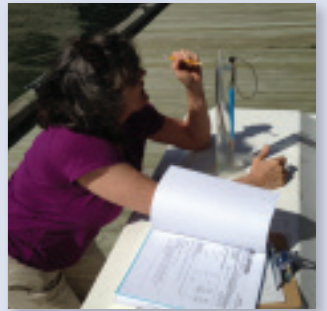
Continuity

Champions for the Bay are making changes for the better.

Training Volunteer Citizen Scientists

82 Citizen Steward volunteers from all around the Bay—including 20 new monitors—collected water quality data at 35 sites around the Bay in 2014. These citizen scientists help our efforts to protect our coastal waters from pollution. They devote ten Saturdays from April through October (during Maine’s most beautiful weather), donating over 2,000 hours to collect invaluable data about the health of Casco Bay.

Our staff collected water quality data at an additional 10 offshore locations, monthly throughout the year, using our Baykeeper boat *R/V Joseph E. Payne*.



Citizen Stewards collect data on the health of Casco Bay.

Inspiring Champions

Over the past year we organized events and volunteer trainings to challenge those closest to us to become active ambassadors for the Bay in their communities. We launched this program last summer with a training that attracted 75 of our closest Friends. Our Champions for Casco Bay use information and data to share our message of stewardship with their friends, neighbors, and town leaders. We arm them with our Bay Papers—one-page primers on critical issues affecting the Bay and what people can do about them. We are continuing to reach out to our community through our environmental Film Festival, BayScaping workshops, and other presentations.



Our Champions for the Bay inspire and educate their neighbors.

Photo: Jeff Roitman



Climate change is changing our ocean food webs.

Educating the educators

We updated our Casco Bay Curriculum to focus on the local impacts of climate change. Teacher workshops included activities and resources on the impacts of sea level rise, warming water temperatures, and increasing ocean acidity, resulting in changes to Gulf of Maine food webs.

Increasing our staff

Friends of Casco Bay added our first new staff member in four years. In October, Sara Biron was hired for the new position of Database Assistant. Having an additional person to manage the records of our donors and data from water quality monitoring allows us to better serve our mission.



Sara Biron, our newest staff member, learns about water quality monitoring.

