**Working Waterfront, Recreational Resources, and Community Character-**

**Working Draft May 2018** – subject to updates, changes and reorganization

**Goal: Preserve working waterfront, sustainable recreational uses and scenic qualities of the York River and watershed lands that are important to regional identity and community character.**

**Goal: Strengthen stewardship of watershed resources by river users, watershed landowners and citizens.**

The objectives and actions in this Stewardship Plan are intended to complement, reinforce and build upon important work already being undertaken by watershed towns of York, Kittery, South Berwick and Eliot, as well as conservation organizations, community groups, and public agencies. Several ongoing actions are included in this plan to emphasize their importance to achieving long-term resource protection goals. A list of studies and plans related to understanding and implementing actions to protect the working waterfront and the scenic and recreational resources of the York River Watershed is included at the end of this section.

**WORKING WATERFRONT, RECREATIONAL RESOURCES, AND SCENIC RESOURCES**

**Objective 1: Promote and sustain activities that support commercial fishing operations and an active working waterfront.**

*Key Actions, to be developed and undertaken in coordination with Town of York, including its Harbor Board:*

* Support development of a York Harbor Management Plan that evaluates infrastructure, uses, needs and current and future capacities for working waterfront and river-dependent businesses; identifies management needs and priorities; and identifies funding needs and possible sources.
* Continue to support and implement maintenance dredges.
* Develop and maintain necessary infrastructure to support commercial and public access, including commercial docks, moorings, boat launch sites, and parking. Support efforts to identify, evaluate and pursue opportunities to enhance commercial fishing dock access and sustainable paddle craft access and parking.
* Evaluate and plan for sea level rise impacts on working waterfront.
* Help maintain commercial fishing as a viable option for future generations and explore ways to diversify operations.

**Objective 2: Encourage sustainable recreational uses and foster user stewardship of river resources.**

*Key Actions, to be developed and undertaken in coordination with Town of York, including its Harbor Board and Parks and Recreation Department:*

* Evaluate options for developing a “river steward” position to help support resource management, education, and stewardship initiatives, including engagement of a citizen corps to help with outreach and promote a culture of self-monitoring and stewardship.
* Evaluate options to implement a sticker/registration program for paddle craft use to provide important safety and resource protection information to boaters and help track the extent and location of users.
* Support development of a Town of York Recreation Plan that identifies river recreation opportunities, infrastructure needs, and management issues, including river access points, parking, launching, and sanitary facilities.
* Develop and maintain safe and sustainable boat launch sites including those at Scotland Bridge, Goodrich Park, Rice’s Bridge, Route 103, and Strawberry Island. Support the installation and maintenance of permanent stormwater and erosion control measures at sites.
* Develop and implement boater education programs using a range of existing and new opportunities (Harbor Masters, ramp/dockside/launch signage, sticker program, river stewards, boater and water safety classes, online resources, etc.) on topics including responsible and safe boating and paddling practices, wildlife and habitat protection, speed zones and no wake zones, etc.
* Promote opportunities for recreational shellfish harvest.

**Objective 3: Maintain and support sustainable public recreation opportunities on watershed lands.**

*Key Actions:*

* Support public access and recreation opportunities on publicly-owned lands.
* Encourage and provide support for large private landowners, including land trusts and water districts, to continue to provide public access and recreation opportunities consistent with resource protection goals.
* Identify opportunities to promote public access points, trail maps and networks, river walks, and trail connections to scenic and cultural resources.

**Objective 4: Identify and help protect important scenic views, including those contributing to historic contexts and rural character, throughout the watershed.**

*Key Actions:*

* Support communities’ efforts to undertake scenic resources inventories and integrate information in comprehensive plans, open space plans, recreation plans, or other planning initiatives or documents.
* Identify threats, protection priorities and opportunities to integrate scenic resource protection measures in existing conservation planning, development review processes, and other resource protection strategies.

**COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP**

**Objective 5: Build appreciation for and create connections to watershed resources.**

*Key Actions:*

* Promote, organize or conduct events and activities that showcase resources to the towns’ residents.
* Explore signage options to highlight the York River Watershed.
* Collaborate with educators in developing lesson plans, presentations, and school programs that incorporate the region’s history, historic preservation and archaeology, the natural environment, and/or other watershed resources; provide technical assistance and outreach materials; develop and support field trips and other activities to engage school children.
* Create or support volunteer opportunities to engage residents in watershed projects, research, and citizen science initiatives. Activities could include water quality or other environmental monitoring, storm drain stenciling, tree planting, invasive species eradication, and archaeology surveys.
* Create educational materials on a variety of subjects relating to the watershed and its values, and disseminate through websites, printed materials, presentations, mobile applications, and signage such as historic markers or trailhead kiosks.
* Develop opportunities for visual artist appreciation of watershed resources through activities such as photo contests and plein air painting and drawing.

**Objective 6: Build capacity and knowledge of the towns’ board and committee members to identify and protect resources.**

*Key Action:*

* Encourage regular site visits and provide training opportunities and workshops for board and committee members on:
  + state and local regulations that protect natural and historic resources
  + available data, maps and other information on local watershed resources
  + state agency technical assistance through Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife/Beginning with Habitat, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and others
  + general best management practices for protecting resource values
  + case studies or other examples of successful approaches to resource protection

**Objective 7:** **Educate the public that resource preservation is culturally and financially beneficial.**

*Key Action:*

* Demonstrate and promote the value of historic resources, working waterfront, natural resources, open spaces, scenic views, and recreational opportunities to the region’s economy and identity.

**Plans, Studies, and Resources Related to Protecting Working Waterfront, Recreational Resources and Community Values of the York River Watershed**

*Planning Documents*

* Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick & York comprehensive plans (including marine resources sections of York plan)
* Eliot and South Berwick open space plans
* Great Works Regional Land Trust’s Strategic Conservation Plan
* Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative’s Conservation Plan

*Additional Data, Technical Resources and Studies*

* State landings data
* York Harbor, working waterfront, and boating infrastructure (docks, moorings, access) – information from Town of York
* Town of York harbor ordinance
* Army Corps of Engineers Harbor Information and Metrics
* York Water District/Kittery Water District Resource Protection Program
* Maine Heritage Coastal Areas Nomination (1987)
* Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission’s York River Watershed Study: Regulatory and Non-regulatory Recommendations Report