

# Managing Maine's Beaches

A Regional  
Planning Approach



*Parson's Beach*

*A cooperative effort sponsored by  
Maine Coastal Program/State Planning Office  
and the towns of Kennebunk,  
Old Orchard Beach, Saco,  
Scarborough, and Wells.*



*Wells Beach*

### ***Why is there Increased Attention on Maine's Beaches?***

**Chronic erosion problems, heightened development pressures, increased demand for public access, higher rates of sea-level rise, and regulatory conflicts** have recently focused attention on southern Maine's beaches.

Maine's dynamic beach systems include coastal hazard areas, floodplains, wetlands, and habitat for endangered species. They also represent some of the most valuable real estate and recreational areas that drive Maine's thriving tourist economy.

Maine's beaches are all the more precious because of their limited extent. Only about 1 percent of Maine's 4500- mile coastline is sandy beach.

## ***What are the Current Issues Along Maine's Beaches?***

Beach erosion has increased greatly due to human activities, especially seawall and jetty construction. Camp Ellis in Saco has already experienced **extensive property loss**. **Chronic erosion** is a problem on Wells and Drakes Island beaches. Bird nesting **habitat is threatened**. Maine's public beaches are experiencing **increased use**.



*Camp Ellis*

Residents and regulators struggle to find common ground between private land-use practices and natural resource concerns. Environmental advocates urge greater beach and habitat protection. Guardians of fiscal resources wish to focus on long-term erosion solutions. Despite differing opinions, healthy sand beaches are a common goal among all stakeholders.

## ***What is Regional Beach Management and Why is it Needed?***

Beach management refers to the collection of **tools and techniques used to conserve and protect beaches**. These tools include site development practices, regulations, erosion control, beach-nourishment strategies, and volunteer data collection. A regional approach to beach management is needed because beaches are natural systems that extend beyond municipal boundaries.

From 1999 through 2001, regional beach planning committees in Saco Bay, Wells Bay, and Scarborough will be trying to reach agreements on new ways to protect Maine's beaches. Erosion control, habitat protection, and regulatory reforms are among the many topics discussed by the regional groups.

These efforts could lead to improved regulations, better understanding of coastal processes, and improved wildlife habitat.



*Kennebunk Beach*

### ***Who is Participating?***

Regional beach planning committee members are appointed by participating municipalities. Participants represent environmental, business and private property interests, and the community at large. Staff from the Maine Audubon Society and Maine Departments of Environmental Protection, Conservation/ Geological Survey, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Maine Coastal Program/State Planning Office represent statewide interests on the planning committees.

### ***What Do the Committees Do?***

The planning committees hear presentations by experts, form goals and objectives for their work, and collect data needed to help make decisions. With the assistance of staff at Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and Maine Sea Grant, committees discuss ideas and work by consensus, to arrive at recommendations about beach management.

### ***What Other Information is Needed to Manage Beaches?***

In addition to the work of the regional planning groups, local volunteers are measuring changes in southern Maine's beaches, with the assistance of Maine Sea Grant, the University of Maine, and Maine Geological Survey. Through this effort, called **beach profile monitoring**, volunteers help create a long-term geologic record of beach dynamics. These data are needed to better predict beach erosion and accretion rates for sustainable beach planning.

## ***How Can I Get Involved ?***

- ◆ Attend planning committee meetings. Meetings are open to the public and your input is welcome.
- ◆ Assist subcommittees with information gathering.
- ◆ Become a beach profile monitoring volunteer.

## ***For more information, please contact:***

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Visit our beach planning website:  
[www.smrpc.maine.org/beachplan.html](http://www.smrpc.maine.org/beachplan.html)

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