

Memo

To: Hancock County Coastal Communities and Other Interested Parties

From: Thomas E. Martin, AICP, Executive Director

Date: March 12, 2015

Re: Implementation of Maine's Rockweed Management Plan

This is a brief overview of Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Rockweed Management Plan and steps for its implementation. For a complete copy of the plan, see: www.maine.gov/dmr/rm/rockweed/DMRRockweedFMPJan2014.pdf . The plan recommended the designation of rockweed conservation areas in which no harvests would be allowed.

Why Is Rockweed Important?

Rockweed has commercial and ecological values. Its primary commercial uses are in high-value nutritional supplements (nutraceuticals) and concentrated fertilizers. Ecologically it is an essential part of the marine ecosystem. It provides a habitat for a number of invertebrates and fish that in turn are a food source for other fish and wildlife.

What Are The Current Regulations?

The DMR oversees regulations that set a minimum rockweed cutting height and mandate daily landings reporting. The primary purpose of these regulations is to assure there is sufficient biomass to preserve the habitat function and allow regeneration. In brief, permits are required for most harvesting. There are some exceptions for detached or dead seaweed that is harvested for non-commercial, charitable, and municipal purposes in volumes of 50 pounds or less. For more information on the regulations, see: www.maine.gov/dmr/lawsandregs/regs/08.pdf .

How Will The No Harvest Areas Be Selected?

The DMR has released a draft report on closure criteria. For the entire report, see: www.maine.gov/dmr/rm/rockweed/Workgroup/RWGDraftReport3Feb15.pdf Due to the complexity of the selection process, final site identification is not expected until 2016. The criteria will focus on a scientific review of any potential impact on sensitive wildlife areas/species using the best available science and distinguish between scientific and non-scientific issues to avoid the politicization of science.

How Do We Keep Informed of the Sites to be Selected?

DMR will post the latest news on its website:

<http://www.maine.gov/dmr/news/2014/RockweedWorkGroup.htm> . To receive e-mailed updates go to: www.maine.gov/dmr/index.htm. Scroll down the page to “subscribe to DMR news and information by topic.” Add rockweed as your topic of interest.

Feel free to contact me at 207-667-7131 or tmartin@hpcme.org if you have any questions.