

Friends of Casco Bay  
How We Work

**Progress May Be Incremental**  
January 2014

Much of our work for Casco Bay is accomplished in increments, bit by bit. We don't expect miracles. If Friends of Casco Bay were in the fable by Aesop, we would appear to be the turtle. Our "work with" approach, described in an earlier *How We Work* piece, embraces incremental progress. For example, it has taken 20 years to prod Portland city officials into doing the work needed to continue cleaning up the problem of sewage overflows.

We identify issues that are threats to the health of the Bay. Identifying whether (or not) an issue is appropriate to our mission and resources is key. We determine whether tackling the issue is appropriate for this organization: is there a solution or a way to prevent the problem; do we have the expertise; do we have the resources—both time and financial—to take on the issue; is there some other group, entity or individual better suited who we could persuade to take on the issue.

The Casco Baykeeper's approach of being both tenacious and gracious pervades our work. Clarifying the edges of an issue and identifying key players, then bringing people along to work through the issue together—at times its own laborious process—are also essential to how we work.

We attempt to bring people along to our way of thinking while remaining open to, even solicitous of others' knowledge and perspectives, to continue to evolve our position, on behalf of the Bay. Many of the issues on which we work are not black and white, but are nuanced by gray areas. Seeing many sides of an issue helps us to work with a wide variety of stakeholders to try to find common understanding and to work toward solutions that benefit the health of the Bay. Sometimes progress can be very slow. Sometimes getting verification of the facts we need to maintain our credibility is a very slow process. Sometimes educating key stakeholders about an issue, eliciting changes in behavior, and changing public policy require a great deal of strategy, time, and patience.

Worldwide, ecological news can be at best discouraging, from the effects of climate change to the ecological impacts of legacy pollutants. In the face of this context, thinking locally and acting locally become as important as ever as a way to feel empowered about making change effective. This necessitates getting to know people throughout the community who may have a vested interest in the effects of an issue on which we are working. Using data, facts, a humanistic approach, and when necessary, the law, we connect and try to find resonance for our positions.

We are committed to building harmony, understanding, and trust in the process of the work that we do every day to protect the Bay. Celebrating victories, however small, and sharing credit, are important. We applaud and celebrate progress, even if it is not at the pace we might like it to be.

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