

**Friends of Casco Bay  
Board Meeting  
Minutes  
Tuesday, October 20, 2020 online via Zoom**

**Attendance:**

**Board:** Board President Sandy Marsters, Stephen Bushey, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Seb Milardo, Tollef Olson, Malcolm Poole, Lori Thayer, Jack Thomas

**Staff:** Sara Biron, Mike Doan, Will Everitt, Ivy Frignoca, Sarah Lyman, Cathy Ramsdell

**Question for the Board:** What was something you saw, or did on the Bay that was amazing or interesting?

Bud: Whale sightings, lots of eelgrass at Centennial Beach

Pat: Sail on a friend's catamaran

David: Lots of boats out on the water, saw sturgeon in Casco Bay which I'd never been seen

Seb: I could be on the water every day this summer and I consider it a privilege

Tollef: Dan Devereau, algal bloom on the air boat, marketable algae growing on the mud, make a product out of problem

Malcolm: Ocean Sunfish, 6 foot by 6 foot, amazing sight from boat

Lori: Saw some spectacular kite surfing! Amazing

Jack: Oyster growing season was amazing, lots of growth. Also, family of eagles loved our point all summer long

Steve: Used the trails near Bug Light, number of masks on the ground was a total downside

**Board Consent Package** *Action Item*

Motion: The minutes and financials were accepted as presented: APPROVED.

Jack shared that we are in good financial shape given the pandemic.

**Community Engagement Committee** *Seb Milardo, Chair*

- The October CEC meeting was a departure from our normal meeting format. We took time out to review the Community Engagement Committee meetings to consider their effectiveness and explore ways to make them more engaging they are. Summary of key takeaways from the discussion included:
  - Generally folks feel positive about the committee and meeting format. Candid conversation, with good back-and-forth on issues of how we engage in this work together.
  - This Committee's focus is to support Staff. Staff use feedback and ideas from the meetings to make course corrections, adapting plans, or help think things through more fully.
  - Nothing is specifically wrong or needs to change, and we can make some tweaks and improvements by:
    - Making sure we involve people in engaging ways.
    - Summarizing at the end of each meeting any action items, when it makes sense from particular discussions.
    - Sharing outcomes and implementations of things generated by the meetings, especially down the road, recognizing the distance between the inception of ideas at the meetings and their realization in the future; connect the dots later for the Board.

## **Casco Bay Matters Preview** *Cathy Ramsdell, Ivy Frignoca, Mike Doan*

This preview will be a more casual preview of what Ivy and Mike will present tomorrow about what they saw this summer.

What was the summer like? Ivy shared what it was like this field season, using social-distancing, working with Mike on the Baykeeper boat, and monitoring sites from docks and piers. What we really missed: using the boat as a floating office, inviting others on the boat. We couldn't do that this year. We missed our colleagues.

When we started and ended the season, water clarity was amazing. We noted how unusually warm the Bay was. Salinity levels were, for the most part, very high given the drought.

Mike shared that we got a lot done: we did all the monitoring that we had planned. Mike shared where and how we monitored. Our monitoring builds on the 25 years of data that past staff and volunteers helped us collect. The most notable part of the field season was how warm the water was all year. We had an unusually warm winter, spring, and summer. Mike shared our chlorophyll data. The water was unusually clear this year and our chlorophyll data reflect that: low chlorophyll levels mean low amounts of phytoplankton in our water. There were large blooms in February, March, and April: after those blooms died off, chlorophyll levels were remarkably low and the water was very clear from June onward. This was the clearest water Mike could ever remember. The drought (low stormwater, which means little sediments) and low phytoplankton numbers likely contributed to this.

Ivy shared that sometimes in Broad Sound she measured a Secchi depth of 5 meters: very clear water. What does that mean? There weren't many phytoplankton blooms in the Bay during the summer, which also means no harmful algal blooms in the Bay. It made Ivy wonder about the base of the food chain.

Mike talked about the effects of the summer's drought on the Bay. We had very high salinity levels because of that. But when it did rain, stormwater had a huge effect on the Bay, and salinities were down to 12-13 parts per million (30 parts per million = normal for the Bay).

Mike and Ivy spoke passionately how active our Water Reporter observing network was this summer and how fantastic it is having observations from hundreds of volunteers.

The data and observations that we collect are key to our advocacy. We use the data in responding to revisions of Clean Water Act permits. The data and observations will continue to be helpful as we continue our work on the Coastal and Marine Working Group of the Maine Climate Council.

We need to get a handle on upgrading Maine's stormwater regulations, given how much our changing climate is affecting the size of our rain storms.

Cathy explained the importance of the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund to support our work. We have less than \$94,000 left to raise in our \$1.5 million goal for the Fund. Everyone from grade school teachers, to other researchers, to aquaculturalists, to policy makers are looking at our data. We will soon have three Continuous Monitoring Stations in the water.

We hosted a special combination of science, advocacy, and community engagement efforts this summer.

### **Questions:**

Pat asked about the plume from the Presumpscot landslide: the river looks solid with zero visibility. What does it look like in the Bay? Ivy: the Portland Water District cleared a lot of the slide which is helping clear the water, and they stabilized the embankment. Mike shared that off Fort Gorges water

clarity returned almost to where it was, but two weeks ago, the water was slate gray. We measure turbidity which is another measure of water clarity. Normally, we measure 1 or 2, which is clear, but turbidity numbers were in the 60s.

What is clarity telling us? Is that good or bad? It's never exactly about good or bad. There are pluses and minuses.

Bud remarked how well Ivy and Mike painted the picture for us about what the work for us was like. Bud encouraged us to think about our work as a stage or performance. Every major donor should be invited to share the work experience with Ivy and Mike. Bud also encouraged us to buy Friends of Casco Bay branded masks. "Being in the field is where the magic happens," as Ivy says.

Mike shared that the upper New Meadows hit 80 degrees Fahrenheit, which is remarkably high. Mike also shared how often sturgeon were jumping out of the water, every time we were out there they were dancing!

Ivy: we saw very few seals and no porpoises. Board members remarked how many they saw.

#### **Executive Director Update** *Cathy Ramsdell*

Cathy gave an update on the South Portland Fertilizer Ordinance Taskforce. We are seen as a credible, helpful partner.

We have been working on the new Staff Writer job description. We will soon open the search. Board are invited to share the job ad, once it is posted. Seb and Sandy, in their professional capacities, helped us with the job description. The search will close at the end of November. We are likely looking at a January hire if we are lucky. The new position will help us better reach out to the community and the media as we tell our stories.

The Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund goal is only \$94,000 away!

The annual fund appeal is going into the mail soon. The special appeal will focus on the campaign. Our Annual Report will also have a special section on the Campaign. It looks like we will meet our timeline to have the two new Continuous Monitoring Stations in the water by April.

We continue our search for new office space.

On the Payroll Protection Program loan forgiveness, we heard from the bank and we will soon apply for the forgiveness.

Cathy shared that we will ask Board Members to hand-write short thank you notes to some of our major donors before Thanksgiving. We will be in touch with you about this opportunity to touch base with our donors in this meaningful way. If you don't have the bandwidth to do it, that's okay, too.

We may also enlist board members to help thank our volunteers as well. It will be meaningful and helpful if you can find time to help us with this. Last year, Sarah Lyman wrote all the thank you notes herself.

We will debrief the Casco Bay Matters event at the next Community Engagement Committee. Please take feedback notes during the event so you can help us evaluate the event.

Stormwater is the largest source of pollution to the Bay. Ivy is working with 22 other Waterkeeper organizations to look at how we can update our state's stormwater regulations in the face of climate change. The DEP has bought into the idea of updating these regulations. This is exciting, cutting edge work. We look forward to talking with you more about this as conversations continue.

**Board discussion:**

Given these difficult times, is there anything else Friends might do to help our constituencies weather the storm? Consider the mood and outlook of your family, friends, neighbors, and communities. Are we doing all we can? Is there more we can we do to help?

Sandy: Webcam! Bring the beauty of the Bay to our people.

Steve: Is there linkage between what we went through with the pandemic and the health of the Bay? Maybe we need more data. We need to provide linkage between our data and community members.

Bud: We are in a rough time over the next several months if not years. Our organization's outreach seems remarkable. Is there any reason to think there might be a sub-working group of board and staff, to make the new way of communication more effective? Can we as a board help the staff be more effective in online communications?

Pat: I love these online Casco Bay Matters events to be in the evening when working people can attend. I would like the events to emphasize that we live in a closed loop system: we are all in the watershed! Acknowledgement that all pollution could eventually make it to the Bay.

David: Reach out to our membership to ask them for their input about what they need, would value, or are interested in us doing. Show our members that we value their input!

Seb: This is a tough question! I see the pandemic as being analogous to climate change. We could help the community see the connections: global; serious; commonality in what we need to consider; belief in science; global cooperation. This is a crisis now, and a bigger one is coming! Provide key writings on this.

Tollef: I don't like this new format and don't have a clear path on what we can do. Photos from a second boat are great!

Malcolm: It's not our job to help. We should stick to our operating plan, stick to our knitting. Monitor, report, engage, motivate, communicate, let's do what we do. I love the webcam idea!

Lori: Fauna are part of the Bay! We should do a little campaign about keeping masks and other PPE out of the Bay. We should do a campaign about how to properly dispose of this waste. This needs to be brought to greater attention.

Jack: Webcam! Great idea! Do more Facebook live as Mike and Ivy are going around the Bay. Take the boat at high tide and show people what is happening. As I drive 295, I see the massive Back Cove stormwater project, educate people why this is a big deal. This will help the Bay! Jack offered to take more people on his boat to follow our work.

Motion to adjourn passed at 5:29 p.m.