

**Friends of Casco Bay**  
**Community Engagement Committee**  
**Minutes**

Monday, May 3, 5-6 p.m., via Zoom

**In attendance**

Board: Sandy Marsters (Board President), Pat Ianni, Malcolm Poole, Joan Samuelson, Lori Thayer

Staff: Sara Biron, Will Everitt, Robby Lewis-Nash, Sarah Lyman, Cathy Ramsdell

**Welcome** - *Board President Sandy Marsters filling in for Committee Chair Seb Milardo*

**Volunteer Metrics, FY21** - *Sarah Lyman*

The purpose of our volunteer program is to help community members connect with our organization and the Bay. We want our volunteers to enjoy working with us and in turn share their experiences with their friends, families and communities, acting as ambassadors of the Bay much like our board members do.

Sarah suggests that as we review the past year's volunteer metrics we think about how our volunteer program is working relative to its purpose. She notes that broadly, we have two kinds of volunteers: those who volunteer with us sporadically at coastal cleanup events or storm drain stenciling projects, while others participate regularly, such as our dedicated Water Reporters.

Sarah reviewed our volunteer metrics from FY21 (metrics are listed at the end of this document):

- FY21 saw a decrease in both the number of volunteers and volunteer hours committed to the organization. This makes sense as the pandemic prevented us from hosting in-person events, such as coastal cleanups. Water reporter was the most active volunteer program in FY21.
- Our Water Reporter program was designed to adapt to the schedules and needs of volunteers while meeting our goal of creating an “ownership” and stewardship culture for the Bay. Looking at the FY21 Water Reporter metrics, we can see that we are meeting some of these goals:
  - The number of enrolled Water Reporters and the number of posts in our watershed have both increased. We also saw an increase in the number of algal blooms we tracked.
  - While the number of enrolled Water Reporters increased, the number of *active* Water Reporters decreased. Of the 255 people enrolled in Water Reporter as members of our Friends of Casco Bay group, 57 of them posted in FY21. However, the number of posts increased; the 57 Water Reporters are contributing on average one post every month. These data suggest an engaged and committed core cohort of Water Reporters.
  - The difference between the total number of posts in our watershed and the number of posts shared with our Friends of Casco Bay group is increasing. We are notified by the Water Reporter app when a post is made anywhere in the watershed, but posts are not automatically shared with our group. When creating a post, Water Reporters must select that they want to share their post with our group. This is an important step because it allows our staff to access higher quality images of their posts and other data. We need to communicate to Water Reporters the importance of sharing posts with our group.

Sandy comments that he expects to see the number of active Water Reporters explode this year. The pandemic made people afraid to go outside, and now many are eager to be out and about. There are also more boaters on the water.

Malcolm commented that we should not be concerned by these drops in participation. If we compare FY21 to the numbers from FY19, we can see that Water Reporter still has momentum despite the pandemic. Considering the circumstances this is a very strong place to be.

Pat asked if we have data on how Water Reporters found the program. Sarah responded that we largely do not. Anecdotally, Sarah said that many Water Reporters simply have free time on their hands and may have found us on the internet, or that young people in the program were connected to us by their parents.

Lori wondered if there is a way to have information about Water Reporter included in the boater registration process. Sarah thought that would be difficult and reminded us that periodically we purchase the contact information for all registered boaters in Maine. Will said that this information sometimes includes emails, and it always includes mailing addresses.

### **Board-centered Water Reporter Training: should we host one?**

The idea to host a Water Reporter training for board members resurfaced at our last board meeting. Many board members showed an interest in participating in the program when asked about their commitments to the Bay for this coming summer.

Malcolm commented that he would prefer to partake in a training with the general public. Joanie is interested in either a board-specific training or a public training. Cathy suggested that because our board members are our most diligent ambassadors we might host a board-specific Water Reporter training to build participation momentum among board members. Pat agreed with Cathy, adding that the training could include a discussion of methods for recruiting new Water Reporters, and in particular how we can recruit people who do not live on the coast.

### **Debrief Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund Donor Meetings and Media - Will Everitt**

We are celebrating the completion of the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund in multiple ways. We began by thanking our earliest and most generous donors, holding online events to express our gratitude. We sent thank-you emails to everyone who donated to the Fund and to those who donated to our general operations. We also updated those who are not donors that we crossed the finish line. As we sent those updates, we conducted media outreach about the Fund and the launch of our new stations. Published and upcoming media coverage includes:

- [The Forecaster](#) (Portland), 4/19; a comprehensive article about our water quality monitoring
- [CBS 13](#), 4/22; a short segment of Mike at Holbrook Wharf
- [Portland Press Herald](#), 4/26; the PPH republishes the Forecaster story from 4/19
- Upcoming coverage from the Harpswell Anchor and Working Waterfront
- Our “Crossing the finish line” video: <https://youtu.be/32HmPsdifqM>

On June 16, we will host an online Casco Bay Matters event to celebrate the completion of the Fund and present initial data from all three Continuous Monitoring Stations. We have also received attention from local media following our distribution of a press release about completion of the Fund and the launch of our new Continuous Monitoring Stations. We will continue to contact local media for coverage of our June 16 event and the launch of CMS Portland.

- Upcoming event: [Celebrating Data From Our New Continuous Monitoring Station — A Casco Bay Matters Event](#), June 16, 5:30 p.m.

Sandy noted that the meetings with major donors were fantastic. These small number of attendees had the advantage of making the gatherings feel more intimate. We should host more events like these to stay connected to our donors. Cathy added that many of our major donors are very busy people with many demands on their time. We wrote them a great thank you email as the invitation, and many donors responded who could not attend

the events. Malcolm agreed with Cathy's assessment. Will thanked the CEC for the initial insight that our media outreach should focus on the launch of the new Stations and less on the money we raised; media professionals agreed that the impact of the funds makes for a better story.

**Upcoming June 16 CBM celebration – Will Everitt**

[\*Celebrating Data From Our New Continuous Monitoring Stations\*](#), will be held at 5:30 p.m. on June 16. The event will be informative and fun, and feature a presentation from Mike on new CMS data. Will encouraged CEC members to [\*share the event invitation with their families and friends\*](#).

Sandy asked for an update on the progress of launching CMS Portland. Cathy responded that the Coast Guard is with us and has approved the project; we are waiting on approval from the Department of Homeland Security. Malcolm offered the use of Union Wharf to site CMS Portland, suggesting that there is no use getting tied up with government oversight if it is not necessary.

**Annual Fund and newsletter update – Will Everitt**

The newsletter is being sent to almost 8,000 households around the Bay. The lead story is about the Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund and the launch of CMS Harpswell. The newsletter also includes stories about Water Reporters, Baykeeping efforts, Robby's hire, and notice of the upcoming June 16 event. Two weeks after we send out the newsletter we will send Annual Fund letters. Unlike past years we cannot gather to stuff Annual Fund envelopes all at the same time. Sarah Lyman is organizing volunteers to stuff envelopes at home on their own, to begin on May 17. We need board members to finish their notes by the 17th or sooner.

**Update on ideas generated by this committee**

Will shares that on May 10 our staff is meeting to talk about pumpout and illicit discharge messaging to get more boaters involved in our work. The CEC has given us a lot of ideas about what this messaging could look like. Staff will come to the next CEC meeting with a draft of that messaging for board member feedback.

Sandy notified us that the Maine Island Trail Association is soliciting ideas from their membership to connect with more boaters and encourage best environmental practices. Malcolm suggests that a conversation between MITA leadership and our leadership could be a good idea.

Pat asked for some explanation of the CEC ideas for a photo contest and a membership for kids. Will responded that a kid's membership is in the operating plan, and we plan to pitch the idea to our community around the holidays. Sandy responded that a photo contest would be great for growing our bank of photographs of the Bay. Pat liked both ideas and offers her support for either.

Joanie suggested that we should speak with WCSH News Center Maine. Every day they broadcast photos submitted by viewers, which often feature Casco Bay. This could be another means of generating visibility.

Lori suggested we host a beach waste sculpture contest. Lori also wondered if there is data about the health of marine life in Casco Bay. She recently saw a powerful story about cancer rates among sea lions in California. Sarah suggested looking to Marine Mammals of Maine. Cathy suggested the Shaw Institute which found PFAS chemicals in Maine seals.

Pat notified us that UMaine and the head of their composites program are hosting a discussion on the offshore wind project to be held on May 11, noon - 1 p.m. She will share a link with staff and board members for those who are interested in attending.

## FY21 Friends of Casco Bay Volunteer Metrics

| <b>Volunteers</b>       | <b>FY21</b> | <b>FY20</b> | <b>FY19</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Volunteers              | 269         | 547         | 236         |
| Total hours volunteered | 818         | 2004        | 1033        |

| <b>Water Reporter Metrics</b>                                       | <b>FY21</b> | <b>FY20</b> | <b>FY19</b> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Cumulative metrics</u>   |             |             |             |
| Number of Water Reporters in the Friends of Casco Bay group         | 255         | 205         | 108         |
| Number of posts in the watershed since launching in July 2018       | 1,739       | 991         | 367         |
| <u>Year by year metrics</u>   |             |             |             |
| Number of Water Reporters who posted during the fiscal year         | 57          | 85          | 54          |
| Number of posts per Water Reporter who posted                       | 13.1        | 7.3         | 6.8         |
| Number of posts in the watershed                                    | 748         | 624         | 367         |
| Number of posts <i>shared with our group</i> during the fiscal year | 556         | * 586       | * 367       |
| % number of posts shared with our group                             | 74%         | * 94%       | * 100%      |
| Number of algal blooms noted or tracked this year                   | 22          | 18          | 6           |

\*The Commons, creators of the Water Reporter app, manually shared most of the FY19/20 posts with us. Moving forward, only volunteers can share their posts with us.

| <b>Coastal Cleanup Metrics</b>      | <b>FY21</b> | <b>FY20</b> | <b>FY19</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of cleanups                  | 0           | 22          | 8           |
| Number of participants              | 0           | 285         | 89          |
| Estimated pounds of trash collected | 0           | 937         | 553         |

| <b>Storm Drain Stenciling Metrics</b> | <b>FY21</b> | <b>FY20</b> | <b>FY19</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of events                      | 0           | 4           | 3           |
| Number of participants                | 0           | 46          | 33          |
| Storm drains stenciled                | 0           | 322         | 277         |