



Maine Coast Heritage Trust



## Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund

April 2010

### AVAILABLE FUNDING:

In 2010-2011, the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP), will distribute approximately \$80,000 to support the protection of high value habitat in the Casco Bay watershed through its *Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund*. The fund will be administered through a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Program, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions as described below. Funding levels for individual projects will vary from a few hundred dollars for fees associated with acquisition to funding ranging from \$5,000 - \$25,000 for land acquisition. Typically, funds for acquisition range from \$5,000 - \$20,000, but larger amounts will be considered for exceptionally large or significant projects.

### USES OF THE FUND:

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund may be used to:

- Pay costs associated with acquisition of high value habitat (e.g. miscellaneous fees, surveys, appraisals);\*
- Purchase an easement on or acquire fee title of high value habitat (described below); or
- Purchase an option on lands with high value habitat.

*\*Costs associated with acquisition will be considered for funding if it is demonstrated that, without assistance, the project is not likely to proceed.*

**GEOGRAPHIC REGION OF INTEREST:** Casco Bay watershed; See the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership website, [www.cascobayestuary.org](http://www.cascobayestuary.org) for a map of the applicable watershed area. The focus of this fund is on lands that are integral to aquatic ecosystems (e.g. coastal, riverine, and freshwater wetland systems). A majority of the funds will be directed to projects in the coastal subwatersheds of the larger Casco Bay watershed.

**WHO CAN APPLY:** Non-profit conservation groups (land trusts, watershed groups), towns, state and federal conservation agencies are all eligible to apply, as long as they demonstrate their commitment and capability to protect and manage land acquired in perpetuity for its natural resource values.

**CBEP HABITAT PROTECTION SUBCOMMITTEE:** The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund will be administered by a subcommittee consisting of the following members. Applicants may contact any one of these individuals to inquire about the fund or initiate the application process.

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## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PROPERTIES PROTECTED:**

All requirements for the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund must be met in order to be eligible for funding.

1. All lands protected through easement or acquisition must be protected and managed for habitat conservation in perpetuity. Applicant must sign a statement provided by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership ensuring permanent protection/management of the property for its natural resource values in perpetuity.
2. Public access, permitted in a manner sensitive to the habitat values of the property, must be assured in perpetuity (due to the use of federal funds from EPA for this program). Applicant must sign a statement provided by the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership ensuring permanent appropriate public access to the property for its natural resource values in perpetuity. However, if a compelling case can be made for why public access will not be allowed on the protected property (such as protection of sensitive wildlife habitats), the application will be considered.
3. If land management activities (e.g. forestry, haying) are envisioned on the property, those activities must be carried out in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner, consistent with the overarching purpose of protecting high value habitat for fish, wildlife and plant communities in perpetuity. Applicants anticipating land management activities must discuss proposed activities with the Habitat Subcommittee.
4. In outreach efforts associated with land acquisition (e.g., written materials, public ceremonies, discussions with key partners), the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund requests appropriate recognition as a partner involved in supporting the land protection initiative. We will supply partners with our logo for visual presentation purposes. In written materials, we request that the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund be credited as co-administered in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Program, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions.
5. Although it is not currently a requirement to receive funding through the CBEP Habitat Protection Fund, the provision of non-federal matching funds for CBEP's federal contribution to any project is strongly encouraged. This commitment of dedicated, non-federal match will need to be documented in writing on the organization's letterhead.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS:**

In an effort to be responsive to applicants and to maintain flexibility, the application process will be relatively simple and informal. There will be no application deadline; instead, applications will be processed as they are received. The process for applying for funding through the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund is as follows:

1. Interested applicants should call one of the members of the CBEP Habitat Protection Subcommittee listed above to explain the project to insure that it falls within fund requirements and criteria and that funds are still available.
2. The applicant should then submit an electronic copy of the following information to the Habitat Protection Subcommittee member with whom they've been in contact:
  - a) Cover letter briefly describing project and requesting funds;
  - b) Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Habitat Protection Fund application or a pre-existing grant application that addresses the selection criteria and requirements;
  - c) Map that clearly identifies the boundaries of land and parcels proposed for protection;
  - d) Appraisal summary sheet or opinion of value, if appropriate;
  - e) Budget outlining the total project costs, committed funds, and potential funding sources – both for the project and for any planned stewardship/management; and
  - f) Letters of support or other supporting materials (optional).

Following a review of the application materials, the selection committee may request additional information or may contact the applicant to arrange a site visit. The Subcommittee aims to finalize funding decisions on an application within 4-8 weeks of receipt of the application.

**SELECTION CRITERIA:**

The following criteria will be used by the CBEP Habitat Protection Subcommittee to select projects for funding. Please address all applicable criteria in your application materials.

- Protection of land that is integral to an aquatic ecosystem (e.g. coastal, riverine, and freshwater wetland habitats);
- High habitat value(s) for fish, wildlife and/or plant communities\*
- Permanent protection of the property
- Public access
- Part of a larger conservation vision
- Contiguous with other protected lands
- Level of threat from development
- Size of the project (larger is generally better)
- Cost-effectiveness of proposal
- Condition of surrounding land
- Likelihood of successful implementation (including acquisition and long-term stewardship)
- Matching funds
- Community support
- Outreach potential

*\* Note: Habitat values will be analyzed and prioritized, using multiple tools that may include but are not limited to the following:*

- *USFWS Gulf of Maine Program's GIS analysis for the Gulf of Maine watershed*
- *USFWS Gulf of Maine Coastal Program/Casco Bay Estuary Partnership GIS analysis for the 15 towns surrounding Casco Bay*
- *USFWS Gulf of Maine Program's database identifying high value nesting islands*
- *"Beginning with Habitat" initiative, incorporating habitat data from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Maine Natural Areas Program*
- *Land cover maps and aerial photographs*
- *Local knowledge*
- *Site visit observations*