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An Educational Addition to the Portland Waterfront

Portland, Maine—On Monday, July 25, a small crew was hard at work on the Portland waterfront, installing signs that will better educate the public on the history of Maine’s Casco Bay and the steps individuals and families can take within our own homes and lives to contribute to environmental sustainability.

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership, housed at the USM Muskie School of Public Service, commissioned a total of ten interpretive signs, which can be seen throughout Bell Buoy Park, adjacent to the Casco Bay Lines ferry terminal in downtown Portland. The first four signs, installed Monday, focus on the environmental history of Casco Bay and on the value of estuaries. Those who visit the park and installation can learn more about the Native American presence in Casco Bay over thousands of years, or the industrial history of Portland's waterfront. Another sign highlights progress made throughout the last 40 years to reduce pollution entering the bay. The signs were designed by Nancy Montgomery Design Inc., a Portland-based graphic design firm.

"Casco Bay's history is well worth sharing," said Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Director Curtis Bohlen. "Humans have wrought tremendous changes in the bay over the years. Portland's industrial past reshaped the shoreline and led to discharges of industrial and human waste – largely untreated – into the bay. Over the past 40 years or so, we have reduced the most egregious sources of pollution, but challenges remain."

The remaining signs, to be installed early in August, will focus on actions visitors to and residents of Casco Bay and the watershed can take to help address those challenges. Today, Casco Bay is threatened more by polluted runoff than by industrial discharges, and visitors will learn about specific actions that individuals can take to reduce polluted runoff.

A brief, family-friendly celebration of this new waterfront installation will be held on-site on Monday, August 8, at 10:00 a.m. For more information, contact Curtis Bohlen at cbohlen@usm.maine.edu

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The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP), housed at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service, is one of 28 national estuary programs and supports a mission to protect and restore the water quality and fish and wildlife habitat of the Casco Bay ecosystem, while ensuring compatible human uses of the Bay. The CBEP works closely with numerous organizations including local, state, and federal government, nonprofits, local businesses, citizens, and universities. Partnership projects and research facilitate effective management of Casco Bay and its watershed through leadership, strategic funding of local initiatives, and facilitation of effective collaboration among the many groups working to improve the health of Casco Bay. <http://www.cascobay.usm.maine.edu/>