

Significant Ecological Areas Town of Saint George Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is identifying areas in the Town having important conservation values as identified on the Natural Resource Inventory Maps as *Significant Ecological Areas (SEA)*. The natural resource maps can be referenced at the Town of St George webpage under "documents" and then "Conservation Commission" <http://www.stgeorgemaine.com/documents.html>. Significant ecological areas are areas in the Town with multiple conservation characteristics including: high value bird and wildlife habitats, streams, wetlands, undeveloped habitat blocks and lands currently under some form of protection. The SEA designation is for planning purposes only and is intended to assist Town boards and committees in carrying out their responsibilities.

The *SEA* designation will assist the Conservation Commission and other boards and committees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities by focusing efforts on the interests of residents as identified in the voter approved *Comprehensive Plan - 2013 for the Town of St George*. The comprehensive plan identifies the following natural resources and conservation goals, policies and strategies.

- a) Protect the quality and manage the use of St. George's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, rivers and streams. (Page 9)
- b) Protect St. George's natural resources including wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shore-lands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas. (Page 9)
- c) Safeguard St. George's forestry, open space, and agricultural resources from development, which affect those resources. (Page 9)
- d) Work with individuals and private conservation organizations for the purchase of conservation easements and for the acquisition of land to preserve valuable open space areas. (Page 14)
- e) Ensure adequate future public access to shoreline areas while maintaining the environmental integrity of the coast, and to promote the retention and development of open space in waterfront areas. (Page 15)
- f) Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of St. George, while protecting the Town's rural character; and make efficient use of public services and prevent development sprawl. (Page 20)
- g) Promote and protect the availability of recreational opportunities for St. George residents. (Page 23)
- h) Promote the preservation of historic and archaeological resources. (Page 23)

Significant Ecological Area Criteria

The approved Natural Resource Inventory maps shall be the basis of the significant ecological area (SEA) designations. The designation is intended as a guide in the protection of whole places rather than individual locations within the town. The SEA designation seeks to identify locations where multiple natural resource and human made features create high value habitats for wildlife. The SEA designation also highlights opportunities for recreation, farmland conservation and access to the shore. The Conservation Commission used the following criteria in designating significant ecological areas.

- Undeveloped stretches of land along fresh water, tidal or salt water bodies
- Wildlife habitat blocks with intact forest, stream and wetland ecosystems
- High value bird and other wildlife habitat ecosystems
- Seabird nesting islands
- Lands providing public shore land access
- Important farmlands
- Lands adjacent to or otherwise linked with Town owned or other conservation lands

Significant Ecological Area Listing

Town of Saint George

Conservation Commission

1. Jones Brook, Long Cove and adjacent Islands

Rationale:

- Extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetland areas are found in the Jones Brook watershed and land adjacent to Long Cove (Map 1).
- The Jones Brook and Long Cove watershed area has large undeveloped habitat blocks (2256 total acres) with extensive areas of high value wildlife grassland, forested, deer wintering, and estuarine intertidal mud flat habitats (Map 2).
- High value bird habitats are found along Jones Brook including extensive inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats. The Long Cove estuary has a Bald Eagle nest site and extensive tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats (Map 3).
- Existing conservation lands in this area include: Town owned Kinney Woods/Town Forest, Jones Brook Footpath, Historical Society owned Robinson Homestead, Bamford Preserve (MCHT), Tommy's Island Preserve (GRLT), Clark and Seavey Island conservation easements (IF&W), High Island (MCHT) and several tax code protected properties (Map 4).

2. Ripley's Stream, Tenants Harbor Marsh and Mud Flats

Rationale:

- The area of Ripley Stream and Tenants Harbor Marsh has extensive National Wetlands Inventory wetlands and high probability wetlands draining into Tenants Harbor (Map 1).
- A large undeveloped habitat block (859 total acres) surrounds the Marsh with extensive areas of high value forested land. Tenants Harbor has high value estuarine intertidal mud flat habitats (Map 2).
- The stream and Marsh have areas of high value bird habitats including extensive inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats. Important tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats are found in Tenants Harbor (Map 3).
- Extensive areas of important farmland soils are found adjacent to Tenants Harbor, but much of these lands have been built upon (Map 5).
- Existing Conservation lands in this area include: Town office and fire station, Town recreation fields and tennis courts adjacent to the harbor, St. George School and nature trails along the Marsh, Library property along the Marsh, Town owned property adjacent to Route 131 and Marsh ("Gray's Garage"), Blueberry Cove 4-H Camp (University Of Maine) and Sea View Cemetery along the Harbor (Map 4).

3. Little Falls Brook, Otis Cove and Teel Cove

Rationale:

- Little Falls Brook watershed drains into Otis Cove and the lower St. George River through extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetlands. A small, unnamed brook drains NWI wetlands into Teel Cove and the lower St. George River (Map 1).
- The Little Falls Brook watershed and adjacent lands including Otis Cove and Teel Cove have large undeveloped habitat blocks (1873 total acres). The area has a deer wintering area along with high value grassland habitats, extensive areas of high value forested habitats and estuarine intertidal mud flat habitats (Map 2).
- High value bird habitats including Bald Eagle nest site, tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats are found adjacent to Otis Cove (Map 3).
- Existing Conservation lands in this area include: town owned transfer station, scouting property and Tenants Harbor Water District property along Little Falls Brook; Teel Cove Preserve (GRLT); several tax code protected properties (Map 4).
- The Lower St. George River is designated to be of statewide ecological significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife (see: *Beginning With Habitat, Focus areas of statewide ecological significance, Lower St. George River*)

4. Howard Pond, Brook and Turkey Cove

Rationale:

- Extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetlands drain into Turkey Cove and the lower St. George River (Map 1).
- A large undeveloped habitat block (611 acres) encompasses much of Howard Pond, Howard Brook and adjacent lands. The area includes a large deer wintering area along with high value grassland habitats, extensive areas of high value forested habitats and estuarine intertidal mud flat habitats in Turkey Cove (Map 2).
- High value bird habitats including extensive inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats surround Howard Pond. Turkey Cove has extensive shorebird feeding and roosting areas and tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats (Map 3).
- Extensive areas of important farmland soils are found in this area (Map 5).
- Existing Conservation lands in this area include: Ridge Church Cemetery, Turkey Cove conservation easement (GRLT) and several tax code-protected properties (Map 4).
- The Lower St. George River is designated to be of statewide ecological significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife (see: *Beginning With Habitat, Focus areas of statewide ecological significance, Lower St. George River*)

5. Mosquito Brook, Harbor, Beach and Head

Rationale:

- Extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetlands drain Mosquito Brook watershed and into Mosquito Cove (Map 1).
- Large undeveloped habitat blocks are located just south (611 acres) and north (1376 acres) of Mosquito Brook drainage. The watershed area includes a large deer wintering area with high value grassland habitats, extensive areas of high value forested habitats. Mosquito Cove has high value marine intertidal mudflats and estuarine intertidal mudflats (Map 2).
- High value bird habitats including extensive inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats are located along Mosquito Brook. Mosquito Cove and Beach has extensive shorebird feeding and roosting areas and tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats (Map 3).
- Existing Conservation lands in this area include: Ridge Church Cemetery, Mosquito Head conservation easement (GRLT) and several tax code-protected properties (Map 4).

6. Fort Point Historic and Recreation Area

Rational:

- Fort Point is an important St. George historic, archeological and recreational site. The fort was built in 1809 as part of a regional effort by the U.S. government to protect American shipping lanes from attacks by the French and British during the Napoleonic Wars. The American three-gun, crescent, earthwork fort had a blockhouse, barracks and magazine. Some earthworks remain at Fort Point. In the 1920s, Governor Baxter bought the fort property from the US Government and it was made into a state park. The property remained without land access. In 2006, the Town of St. George purchased the land between the Point and the spring from Robert Skoglund in order to procure public access to this historic landmark and its scenic views of the St. George River.
- A small, unnamed brook flows through the Town property just west of the spring and into the St. George River (Map 1).
- Bordering Fort Point and extending north along the St George River to the South Thomaston town line are high and moderate value tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitats (Map 3). This section is also one of the few remaining stretches of undeveloped private shore front land along the St George River in the Town.
- The land adjacent to Fort Point, including Robinson Homestead and Wiley's Corner has some of the best and most extensive areas of prime and important farmland soils in Saint George (Map 5).
- A footpath beginning at the spring parking area (Route 131) leads west through Town land to Fort Point. The Jones Brook footpath leads from the parking area east across Route 131 through Robinson Homestead land on

- to the Kinney Woods Town Forest. The network of footpaths and protected lands is an important Town recreation area (Maps 6).
- The Lower St. George River is designated to be of statewide ecological significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife (*Beginning With Habitat, Focus areas of statewide ecological significance, Lower St. George River*)

7. Wheeler Bay, Seal Harbor and adjacent shore lands

Rational:

- Extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetland areas are found adjacent to Wheeler Bay (Map 1).
- The coves surrounding Wheeler Bay have extensive areas of high value estuarine intertidal and marine mudflat wildlife habitats (Map 2).
- The most extensive areas of high and moderate value inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats found anywhere in the Town are located along the shore lands of Wheeler Bay, Rackliff Bay and Seal Harbor. These important habitat types include eelgrass beds, mussel bars/beds and mudflats (Map 3).
- Permanently conserved lands in this area include: Wheeler Bay Wildlife Preserve, Norton Island, Seavey Island and parts of Clark, Elwell and Whitehead Islands (Map 4). Bordering Wheeler Bay is a stretch of shore land designated as working waterfront.
- It is worth noting there is no public access in this part of Town and this includes the conserved lands.

8. Watts Cove and Cutler Cove

Rational:

- Extensive National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and high probability wetland areas, including Ponderosa Pond, drain into Watts and Cutler Cove and the lower St George River through several small-unnamed brooks (Map 1).
- Watts and Cutler coves have extensive areas of high value estuarine intertidal mudflat wildlife habitats (Map 2).
- The coves have extensive areas of high value shorebird feeding and roosting areas and tidal waterfowl wading bird habitats (Map 3).
- Conserved lands in this area include three Georges River Land Trust permanently conservation easement protected lands and several tax-code protected lands (Map 4).
- Extensive areas of important farmland soils are found in this area (Map 5).
- Native American shell middens are reported on Snows Point land adjacent to Cutler and Watts Cove.
- The Lower St. George River is designated to be of statewide ecological significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife (*Beginning With Habitat, Focus areas of statewide ecological significance, Lower St. George River*)

9. Seabird nesting Islands

Rational:

- In the mid-1990's biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Department of Inland Fish & Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy and Maine Coast Heritage Trust compiled a list of 677 islands where seabirds were historically or currently present and developed criteria for Nationally Significant Seabird Islands.
- St. George seabird nesting islands include: The Brothers, Hay Ledge, Gunning Rocks, Hart Island, Magee Island, Burnt Island and Eastern Egg Rock among others.

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<http://www.stgeorgemaine.com/documents.html>