



# Public Water Access

A community project for the Town of Cushing

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# Discussion Topics



**01**

The Question Before Us

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**02**

Benefits

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**03**

Concerns and Responses

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**04**

The Plan

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**05**

How to get your ideas known

# The Question Before US

- Will the Town of Cushing spend \$365,000 (\$265,000 from the Town's Public Water Access Fund, \$43,000 from the Boat Excise Account balance, \$31,000 from newly raised and appropriated funds for this question, and \$26,000 from the Undesignated Fund), to acquire 1.56 acres, labeled on Cushing Tax Maps as Lots 031-010 and 031-011, for the purpose of owning and operating public water access?



A simple YES/NO question.

But not a simple undertaking

# History



**The townspeople have waited 236 years for public water access.**

- Approximately 20 years ago the Town agreed to set aside funds for public water access.
- Always obvious that property costs constantly exceed the funds accumulating
- To achieve the goal, outside funds would be necessary
  - A gift of land or money
  - Grants
  - Institutional partnerships

# A Site is Identified



- Two years ago, a potential property was identified
  - 16 Barnacle Lane
- This properties formed part of the Dennis Young Sr. estate
- Negotiations with the estate trust resulted in a purchase and sale agreement.
- The project managers want to thank the Young family for supporting this project





# Cushing Maine

## Partnerships



- We reached out to the Island Institute for help
  - Olivia Richards began working to identify funding sources
  - Land for Maine's Future (LMF) was approached
  - Meeting in Cushing on June 10<sup>th</sup>. 2025
    - Melissa Britsch, Senior Planner at the Maine Coastal Program
    - Deirdre Gilbert, Director, Bureau of Policy and Management at the Department of Marine Resources
    - Laura Graham, Director, Land for Maine's Future at the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
- Cushing was encouraged to submit a proposal for the next LMF board meeting

# Application



- Documentation prepared
- MNAC evaluation completed
- Submitted August 20<sup>th</sup>. 2025
  - Erin Lloyd assigned as LMF Project Manager
- Sponsor identified
  - Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
  - Flora Drury assigned as IF&W Project Manager
- LMF Board meeting
- Proposed closing date: 6/30/2026

# Approval!



- The LMF Board awarded 50% matching funds – 9/2/2025
- But more work had to be done
  - Site visits
  - Survey
  - Appraisal
  - Town vote to approve purchase (March 16<sup>th</sup>. from 2pm to 8pm)
- These are still currently ongoing and should be complete by the end of January.





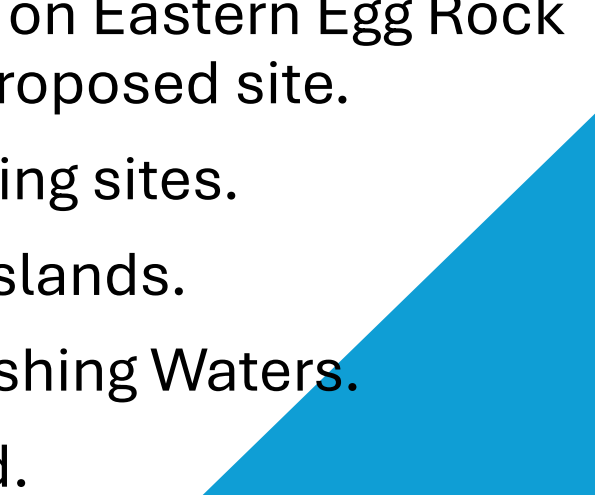
# Benefits

- Emergency Services for Access to Island Residents and On-Water Accidents.
- Commercial Lobstermen.
- Aquaculture Farmers.
- Shellfish Diggers.
- Rockweed Gatherers.
- Island Property Owners with no easement or contracted access.
- Recreational Boaters, particularly those who do not own waterfront property.
- Anyone needing to launch or haul out watercraft.
- And many other uses for the town residents.

*As described on the application to LMF*

# Benefits IF&W View

Conserve land that provides access to land and waters that provide opportunities for traditional, non-intensive wildlife focused recreation by the public.

- Cushing Coastal Waters have significant wildlife opportunities. Perhaps the most significant is the Puffin seasonal nesting grounds on Eastern Egg Rock and Matinicus Rock, both easily accessible from this proposed site.
  - Many small uninhabited islands are excellent bird viewing sites.
  - There is a large seal habitat around Stone and Seavey Islands.
  - Sun Fish, also know as Mola, are frequently seen in Cushing Waters.
  - Porpoise and Minke Whales are also frequently spotted.
- 

# Concerns



- We are beyond the point of shall land be acquired for public access
  - That decision has been made and supported annually for 20 years.
  - Funds continually set aside – even increased at one point
  - Now at the brink of an acquisition
- What are the allowed activities
  - Daytime launch and retrieval of boats
  - Dinghy access to boats moored nearby
  - Emergency on-shoring of a disabled craft

# Concerns



- No commercial activity other than access
  - No pier for loading or unloading – floats only for dinghy tie up.
- Operators will be required to have and show a Maine Boaters Certificate
- No overnight parking
- No boat storage
- No access from Barnacle Lane
  - Remove the right of way from deed
  - Clear boundaries
- Add signage indicating allowed/prohibited activities
- Coordinate with DOT for traffic concerns



# Concerns



- Costs
  - The project is designed to keep Town costs within the current contribution – at some future point adjusted for inflation.
  - Clear the lot and gavel the roadway portions. Reduce the maintenance to mowing and weed control.
  - Perform work with town and grant monies.
    - LMF Stewardship Grant - \$20,000 already applied for.
    - Working Waterfront Access Protection Program
    - Shore and Harbor Planning Grants
    - Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP)
- This is a **long term** project – not happening overnight



# Resources

They are out there – just look!



Maine.gov

<http://www.maine.gov> › dmr › resilience

## Working Waterfront Resiliency Grant Program ✓

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR), the Department of Transportation, the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) are ...



Island Institute

<https://www.islandinstitute.org> › giving › support-main...

## Support Maine's Working Waterfronts ✓

In March 2024, three severe winter storms hit Maine's coast, and Island Institute provided immediate aid to the **working waterfront** businesses most ... [Read more](#)



Island Institute

<https://www.islandinstitute.org> › marine-economy › wo...

## Working Waterfront Protection ✓

Recognized as one of the world's richest marine ecosystems, the Gulf of Maine has over 1,000 miles of coastline, including islands. [Read more](#)  
Missing: improvement | Show results with: improvement



Representative Chellie Pingree (.gov)

<https://pingree.house.gov> › uploadedfiles › decd...

## maine working waterfront business resources ✓

Jan 1, 2024 — Businesses may partner with municipalities to access funds



Maine.gov

<https://www.maine.gov> › dot › about › funding › grants

## Small Harbor Improvement Program ✓

The **SHIP program** can provide up to \$250,000 in assistance towards eligible projects. Ongoing **Program** for Future **Funding** Assistance. This grant application is ... [Read more](#)



AI Overview

Maine offers major marine infrastructure grants, primarily the **federal Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program** (for transient boats 26ft+) and the state-funded **Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP)** (for municipal waterfronts), alongside other planning grants, all aimed at boosting economic development and public access in coastal/tidewater areas, managed by MaineDOT and DMR. [Link](#)

+8



## Key Grant Programs

• **Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program:**

# Resources

They are out there – just look!



Recognized as one of the world's richest marine ecosystems, the Gulf of Maine covers more than 5,000 miles of coastline, including islands. While Maine's marine living resources have long been a mainstay of the state's economy, particularly in rural areas, only about 20 miles are reserved for the working waterfront and just 16 are dedicated to commercial fishing activity.

## Protecting Maine's Working Waterfronts

Maine's working waterfront is a critical part of our state's ["blue economy"](#) and has come under intense pressure in recent years due to rapid development, climate change, and global economic forces. These pressures, in combination with sky-rocketing real estate values, have led many working waterfront business owners to contemplate selling their waterfront properties and exiting the sector.



**"Once access points are gone, they do not come back.**

The need to protect existing access is both urgent and critical, and while we need to understand more comprehensively the overall economic impact of our seafood industry, we cannot wait for that data to act.




Maine needs a statewide action plan to protect its working waterfront and access before it's so diminished as to be irrelevant."


**— MERRITT CAREY, ESQ.**

# Resources

They are out there – just look!



  Accessing the Maine Coast 

Search... 

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LAND TRUSTS AS PUBLIC INTEREST ENTITIES IN PLANNING, ENHANCING, CREATING, SECURING, AND MANAGING ACCESS?

Land Trusts and conservation organizations can assist in the process of protecting and preserving access. If your goals align with the goals of a local land trust, they may be able to help municipalities purchase land and secure access long term. For more information and to find a land trust near you, visit the following resources:

- [Land Trust Alliance](#)
- [Maine Coast Heritage Trust](#)
- [The Conservation Fund](#)
- [The Trust for Public Lands](#)

<https://umaine.edu/accessingthemainecoast/government-and-public-entities/#gp3>

# The Process



- Amend the Coastal Waters Ordinance to authorize the Harbor Board to create Water Access Point Regulations
  - Regulations are easier to amend and implement
  - Provides a regular forum for all future citizen suggestions
- The Harbor Board will begin to gather Town citizen suggestions
- Publish an ongoing list of suggestions and actions taken
  - E.G. “Added to Regulations”, “Under Consideration”, “Not Implemented”
  - Publish on Website



# The Plan



- Acquire the land
  - Nothing happens without this step
- Clear the land
  - Demolish house, shed and most of the pier
  - Cut down trees
  - Put in a slipway
- This may take two or more years before a functional access point is in place.



# A flat lot with a simple ramp

- Hardscape base with concrete slabs



*Images created courtesy of Bill Aboud*

# Get your ideas known

- [WaterAccessIdeas@cushing.maine.org](mailto:WaterAccessIdeas@cushing.maine.org) or Website page - TBD
  - Proposed, but not yet implemented, e-mail for Town citizens to submit comments
  - If acceptable. Will be forwarded to all appropriate board members and town officers
- Must be a Town Registered Voter
- E-mail must clearly identify sender – name, address, contact #
  - Particularly if sender's email is a moniker
  - Anonymous submissions will be discarded
  - No group submissions – one e-mail, one vote



# New Town Website 2/1/2026





# Town Staff Create Content

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Logoff

## Town of Cushing, Maine

Welcome to the administrative portal, where you can add, edit, update and delete important town information.

### Today's Hours

Closed today.

### Town Office

#### Town of Cushing

39 Cross Road

Cushing, ME 04563

Phone: 207-354-2375 · Fax: 207-354-1375

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