



Keeping Working Waterfronts at Work: A National Perspective on Coastal Communities

What is NOAA Doing to Support Working Waterfronts?



Fishtown Harbor, Leelanau Peninsula, MI.
(credit: Michigan Sea Grant)

The issue:

Waterfronts along our coasts are experiencing increasing pressure from competing demands such as population growth, development and shifting land ownership patterns. As a result, fishermen and water-dependent businesses are being displaced, and coastal communities across the country are at risk of losing their working waterfronts. Without assistance, commercial fishermen may have to relocate or leave their businesses, communities lose seasonal vibrancy as year-round waterfront activities are replaced by private, non-industrial development, and public uses compete for shrinking shoreline access. In the future, these challenges will only intensify as these trends continue.

Who is affected? Commercial and recreational fishermen, ports, harbors and other water-dependent businesses, as well as citizens seeking access to the water for recreational activities such as fishing, boating, swimming and sight-seeing are losing access to these freshwater and marine resources.

Why is this important? Working waterfronts are parcels of property that provide access for water-dependent commercial activities, or provide public access to the navigable waters of the state. Working waterfronts are important to sustaining the Nation's local economies. Revenue from maritime commerce, commercial fishing, aquaculture and tourism all contribute to diverse and healthy coastal economies. Loss of working waterfronts can impact multiple sectors of the local economy. Multiple-use waterfronts that support water-dependent businesses and provide citizens with access to the water, contribute to economic vitality and quality of life, helping to build vibrant, livable communities and maintain local heritage.

Why is NOAA involved? Although these issues concern local and state governance, they are of national significance. NOAA has substantial capability to support a thriving maritime industry and to assist coastal communities in their efforts to preserve jobs and to protect access to their marine and freshwater resources.

NOAA's Focus

"Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies" and "Healthy Oceans" are two of four long-term goals that form the cornerstone of the Agency's *Next-Generation Strategic Plan*. The plan calls for NOAA programs to "invigorate coastal communities and economies," in order to foster "increased resiliency and productivity," and to ensure that seafood harvest, production and recreational fishing opportunities "continue to support vibrant coastal communities and economies."

Programs from across the Agency are working together to help realize these goals by:

- Providing coastal communities with relevant scientific information to develop new tools, techniques and strategies that can be incorporated into planning and economic development efforts.
- Providing resources to engage in local planning and capacity building necessary to protect or redevelop working waterfronts.

(continued)



Commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Maine.
(credit: New Hampshire Sea Grant)



Multiple-use working waterfront in Juneau, Alaska.
(credit: Alaska Sea Grant)



NOAA Accomplishments

NOAA's Focus (continued from page 1)

- Providing funding for public access and waterfront development that leverages additional public and private funding.
- Bringing commercial and recreational groups together to work collaboratively toward solutions and raise the working waterfronts dialogue to the national level.
- Facilitating dialogue among states and localities to leverage and capitalize on knowledge from previous successes.
- Providing policy and legal research that informed the development of legislation at the state and federal levels to preserve working waterfronts and protect community access to the water.



A sign of the times. People in Maine and other states are feeling the effects of diminished coastal access. (Credit: Maine Sea Grant)

Highlights: NOAA's Recent Activities

NOAA programs and partners are engaged in working waterfronts and coastal access issues across the Nation.

- **Technical Assistance Helps States with Waterfront Planning and Revitalization Efforts:** NOAA supports technical assistance for local community harbor planning and development in Maine; policy and planning assistance to local governments for waterfront revitalization in Florida; and improvements to the Texas Aransas Channel waterfront for public access that will enhance economic opportunities.
- **National Symposia on Working Waterfronts Engage Citizens to Help Find Solutions:** NOAA programs sponsored two national symposia (2007 and 2010) in Virginia and Maine that provided those with a stake in coastal access with an opportunity to discuss local solutions to water access loss and possibilities for working together regionally and nationally.
- **Coastal Access Tools Customized for Six States:** NOAA and partners developed an online clearinghouse of information on legal and policy tools for property owners, public interest entities and recreational users to address local coastal access issues. The website, Accessing the Maine Coast (<http://www.accessingthemaine coast.com>), has since been adapted for use in five other states. Now, residents in New Jersey, Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama and Hawaii have a common resource offering information on legal and policy tools for coastal access.

What's Next: Proposed NOAA Working Waterfronts Program

The President has requested \$8 million in his FY2012 budget to create a working waterfronts grant program. This program will assist distressed or at-risk fishing-dependent coastal communities. NOAA will provide resources for communities to engage in planning, capacity building and other activities, including protection of traditional water-dependent uses, that make the communities more economically resilient.

- **NOAA Partners with Fishing Communities to Support Innovative Fisheries Management:** NOAA is working with several partners and NGOs to support the participation of fishermen and fishing communities in the development of new and innovative fishery management techniques. For example, the Fisheries Innovation Fund initiative will help fishing communities retain access to fisheries resources and promote well-designed catch share programs to help rebuild fisheries.
- **Profiles Document Infrastructure and Resource Management Issues in Local Communities:** NOAA has conducted almost 1,000 fishing community profiles which capture the socioeconomic trends and concerns in each community, resource management issues (including access issues), and both their current and historical engagement in fishing. The profiles will be updated periodically in order to track changes over time.