

May 15, 2008

For Immediate Release:

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### **New Hampshire Estuaries Project Receives \$25,000 to Enhance Watershed Planning in Maine**

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation – Piscataqua Region has made a \$25,000 contribution to the New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) to support the development of land use planning resources for 10 Maine communities located within the Great Bay Estuary watershed. This effort is part of the NHEP expansion into Maine that will enhance natural resource management on a watershed-scale.

The funding from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation will be used in part to produce detailed maps of impervious surfaces, such as roads and buildings, in the Maine communities of Acton, Berwick, Eliot, Kittery, Lebanon, North Berwick, Sanford, South Berwick, Wells, and York from 1990, 2000, and 2005. Impervious surfaces are an indicator of land use development that, if allowed to become extensive, will degrade water resources. These chronological maps will reveal development trends at a community and watershed scale. Armed with this information, local land use boards can better identify threats to areas that are critical to maintaining water quality and take action to protect these areas from encroaching development.

Since 1995, the NHEP has provided monitoring data, technical assistance, and outreach programs to 42 New Hampshire communities that were part of an estuary watershed. Administrative restrictions prevented the program from providing assistance outside of the state, however, in 2005 the University of New Hampshire began to administer the federally-funded program. This enabled the NHEP to provide assistance to the Maine communities that comprised nearly 20% of the Great Bay Estuary watershed. NHEP staff members welcome the opportunity to work in Maine.

“The recent decision to include the Maine part of the watershed in our efforts was critical for achieving our mission of protecting and restoring estuaries in the seacoast region,” notes Jennifer Hunter, NHEP Director. “There’s a lot of good work being undertaken by communities and watershed organizations in southern Maine, and we’re looking forward to helping facilitate additional collaborative watershed projects,” said Hunter. The NHEP will invite representatives from Maine communities, agencies, conservation groups, and planning organizations to participate in the development of the NHEP’s next comprehensive management plan.

Celina Adams, Senior Program Officer with the NH Charitable Foundation, believes the expansion of the NHEP into Maine is an important step in managing shared water resources. Adams notes that, “For years the NHEP has provided data and support to New Hampshire communities so they could better protect local water resources. Water however is a shared resource in the region. It moves without regard to state boundaries therefore, The Charitable Foundation is pleased to assist the NHEP in its efforts to include Maine communities and to encourage cooperative management of regional resources.”

The NHEP is a collaborative program involving governmental agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, businesses and the public to protect, enhance and monitor the environmental quality of the region’s coastal bays and rivers. The NHEP is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through an agreement with the University of New Hampshire. Learn more at [www.nhep.unh.edu](http://www.nhep.unh.edu).

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