



January 22, 2014

Dear Northeast Regional Planning Body,

The National Working Waterfront Network believes that working waterfronts play a critical role in our coastal communities and provide an important connection between ocean uses and land-based markets. Working waterfronts connect ocean uses to land-based markets and provide a critical access point to ocean space for fishermen, ocean energy, and a multitude of other uses but most importantly, working waterfronts provide a gateway to the ocean for our nation's coastal communities. Many communities were built around vibrant working waterfronts and over time have come to define themselves by the connection to their working waterfront, bordering ocean space, and ocean uses. The culture and economies of coastal communities are inextricably linked to secure access to the ocean and the resources it provides. Working waterfronts are the lens through which the public views and accesses ocean space. The goals, objectives, and actions the Northeast Regional Planning Body is currently developing should reflect the important role working waterfronts play in the success of our ocean and coastal economy.

The National Working Waterfront Network is a nationwide network of businesses, industry associations, nonprofits, local governments and communities, state and federal agencies, universities, Sea Grant programs, and individuals dedicated to supporting, preserving, and enhancing our nation's working waterfronts and waterways. The NWWN recently completed project for the Economic Development Administration, [<http://www.wateraccessus.com/toolkit.html>] that developed a sustainable working waterfront toolkit and characterized the nation's working waterfronts by looking at numerous case studies, the historical and economic trends driving change on the waterfront as well as the policy, legal, regulatory, and financial tools available to help protect our working waterfronts.

As noted in the Sustainable Working Waterfront Toolkit and accompanying report on the state of the Nation's Working Waterfronts, there are a number of policy and financial tools that have or could be used to protect working waterfront infrastructure. At the same time, there are very few programs or policies focused solely on working waterfront infrastructure. Working waterfronts are impacted by a wide range of government policies ranging from local zoning to federal fisheries management to FEMA floodplain management to international trade patterns. At the same time, there are a wide variety of federal programs that have invested in working waterfront related infrastructure. These investments are not well coordinated or even understood in a regional context. Additionally, participants at the third National Working Waterfront and Waterways Symposium held in Tacoma, WA in March 2013 identified the need for additional socio-economic data to be collected and requested the NWWN pursue further research in this area.

To help the determine concrete next steps that the RPB could take in regards to working waterfronts, the NWWN created an ad-hoc working group, drawn predominately from its steering committee's New England to develop a framework for how working waterfronts fit within ocean planning. The framework is attached as a separate document. We expect this will be a living document as the connection between working waterfronts and ocean planning has not yet been a topic of significant conversation.

We would like to offer our Network as a resource and to assist this process in any way that we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions concerning working waterfronts.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Stephanie E Otts in blue ink.Handwritten signature of N. Springuel in blue ink, with a horizontal line underneath.

Natalie Springuel and Stephanie Showalter Otts

Co-Chairs, National Working Waterfronts Network



## **National Working Waterfront Ocean Planning Framework Document**

Prepared by NWWN Ad hoc NE MSP Committee (Natalie Springuel, Maine Sea Grant, Nick Battista Island Institute, Jack Wiggin Urban Harbors Institute, Hugh Cowperwaite Coastal Enterprise Inc.) for NE Regional Planning Body

January 22, 2014

Based on our experience working on working waterfront issues at the local, state, and national level, we believe that the following course of action would address the issues raised in our companion letter to the NERP. We hope that this document can serve as a guide to help NERP members determine the best course of action.

The NERP should adopt a course of action in the near term that is focused on substantially increasing our knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and economic value of working waterfronts in the region and the activities that depend on them. The human activities that now occur or will occur on the ocean emanate from or are destined for and are supported by these waterfronts. An understanding of the types of existing water-dependent activities and the capacities and capabilities of the shore-based facilities of each of the region's working waterfronts seems an essential input for marine spatial planning and decision making. This approach would provide transferable models to other regions for integrating working waterfront goals into the marine spatial planning process. For the purposes of ocean planning, we believe that the first step is prioritizing the variety of direct, federal monetary investments in working waterfront infrastructure.

We suggest the following:

- Compile information on public investment in the region's working waterfront infrastructure. Federal, state and municipal government expenditures on dredging channels, building breakwaters, bulkheads, wharves and piers, etc., are investments of public resources that enable and support commercial and recreational use of coastal and ocean waters. Cataloging these investments in the region's working waterfront infrastructure fills in one of the data gaps in terms of what is known about working waterfront infrastructure.
- Identify and summarize each state's policies and programs for working waterfronts and any data and information that has been compiled. For example, Maine has a number of government and other resources and information already identified about some kinds of state investment in working waterfronts and has mapped working waterfront infrastructure along its coast. Rhode Island has done a similar statewide inventory and Massachusetts has numerous sources including municipal harbor management plans. This review would help inform subsequent tasks.

- Using existing sources, supplemented as necessary by outreach to regional stakeholders, document the public and private facilities that support water-dependent commercial and recreational uses of each working waterfront. Characterize the marine-related activities of each working waterfront and develop a typology of these waterfronts based on nature of their principal activities (commercial fishing, maritime shipping, energy, passenger transportation, recreational boating, etc.) and the economic value of these activities. This will provide a clearer and comparative picture of the region's working waterfronts. This region-wide information could help provide the rationale and justification for needed additional public investment in dredging.
- Determine how to incorporate municipal or local public investment in working waterfront infrastructure into the decision-making framework.

We recommend staying away from issues related to zoning, flood plain management, fisheries management, and other perspective policies that substantially impact the region's working waterfront infrastructure but are not direct federal monetary investments.

Additionally, it is worth noting that these recommendations are consistent with the recommendation made to NROC in the Spatial Characterization of New England Fisheries Report available at <http://northeastoceancouncil.org/2013/09/23/report-describing-first-phase-of-the-commercial-fishing-mapping-project-is-now-available/> and excerpted below.

#### **D. Role and Value of Working Waterfronts**

Working waterfronts provide a critical link between commercial fishing industries, land-based infrastructure, and markets where fishermen obtain bait and fuel, as well as land their catch. The presence or absence of working waterfronts can significantly influence distribution of commercial fishing activities. As communities across New England have seen, a decline in the fishing industry can have large and often negative consequences for the adjacent communities.

NROC should consider working waterfronts to be an integral piece of the marine spatial planning process. It should create a regional inventory of working waterfront infrastructure, particularly that which is public or has received public funding. For the purposes of this report, that should be focused on public investment in the continued viability of the commercial fishing fleet.

Beyond mapping physical infrastructure, NROC should also map the use of ocean space emanating from the region's working waterfront communities, this is similar to the mapping by community recommendation below and could be combined with those data collection efforts.

To help address issues related to working waterfronts, NROC should consider partnering with the National Working Waterfront Network (NWWN) to host a meeting with leaders of the region's working waterfront communities. Further information about working waterfronts, including their economic value to the New England region, can be found at the National Working Waterfront Network's website. The "Sustainable Working Waterfront Toolkit," may also be downloaded at:

<http://www.wateraccessus.com/toolkit.html>.