

NOTE TO READERS: This is a *draft* of the Kennebunk Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides us with a description of the town today in a range of categories, and identifies issues and recommendations for the future. The final version will include an introduction, be professionally formatted and contain multiple photographs. As a town resident, you are encouraged to look at this draft in this early format. **We are now looking for comments and opinions on its contents**, especially the *Issues & Implications* and *Recommendations* sections at the end of each chapter.

The Town will make changes to this draft based on the comments and opinions received, and residents will vote whether or not to accept the final Plan in June 2019.

Chapter I: Marine Resources

Overview Of Marine Resources: The Kennebunk River and the Mousam River

Waterbody Name	Kennebunk River
Waterbody Size	18 miles (main stem), 154 miles (perennial & intermittent tributaries)
Watershed Area	59 square miles
Watershed Town(s)	Alfred, Arundel, Biddeford, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Lyman

Waterbody Name	Mousam River
Waterbody Size	23 miles (main stem), 349 miles (perennial & intermittent tributaries)
Watershed Area	117 square miles
Watershed Town(s)	Acton, Shapleigh, Waterboro, Sanford, Alfred, Lyman and Kennebunk

Description of Kennebunk River: Uses and Value

The Kennebunk River provides many uses including fishing, swimming, kayaking, and boating. Freshwater portions (upstream of Punky Swamp and all tributaries) sustain wild brook and brown trout habitat. Striped bass is popularly fished below head-of-tide and brings many anglers to the river each year. The tidal portion of the river, south of the Route 9 bridge, is a popular cruising destination and home to 13 marinas providing over 300 slips and 360' of linear dock space open to recreational and commercial vessels. The Kennebunks are largely sustained by the tourism industry and dependent on a healthy river system. Restaurants, hotels, and event venues benefit from the rivers scenic and aesthetic qualities. Charter and commercial fishing vessels depend on the quality of the water and the health of the river's fisheries.

Description of Mousam River: Uses and Value

At a point just below the dam on Route 1, the Mousam River becomes tidal. Depending on the time of year, shad, alewives, elvers, sea run trout and striped bass are found up and down the tidal reaches of the river. Today there is an active commercial fishery for elvers. Most of this fishery takes place along the rocky banks a few hundred yards downstream of Route 1. Recreational fishing is popular from Route 1 to Parsons Beach.

Kennebunk Harbor

The lower reaches of the Kennebunk River, which is tidal almost up to its intersection with Route 1, is the only harbor in Kennebunk. The width of the navigation channel averages approximately 50 feet with a depth averaging between 13 and 15 feet at high tide and between three and 6 feet at low tide. The speed of the river depends upon the time of year and the nature of the tide. Generally the speed is considered to be between three to five knots.

In 1984 the Towns of Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Arundel established a Kennebunk River Committee to oversee all harbor activities. This committee facilitates the development of and compliance with the harbor ordinances originally adopted in 1985. That ordinance grants the Harbormaster the authority to administer and enforce harbor ordinances. Along with overseeing harbor operations, the Harbormaster has the authority over all moorings, their locations and assignments. There are presently 68 moorings on the river. Thirty-one moorings are registered as commercial. Twenty-seven of these are fishing vessels, three are held by Charter fisherman. One mooring is held by the state for use by Marine Patrol. Thirty-six of the moorings are registered to non-commercial, recreational users. One mooring is managed by the town and is available for rent by transient boaters (with a maximum stay of three nights). According to the Harbormaster, in 2018 the waiting list for moorings numbered 30, 6 of whom are commercial users. The average waiting period for a mooring in the river is 8.0+ years.

The following recaps the profile of commercial users relying on mooring in the Kennebunk River in 2018:

- 27 Lobster boats
- 3 Private Charter fishing/Tuna boats

Outside of the mooring field the river is also home to several other commercial vessels. Most of these are located at slips in various locations on the harbor:

- 1 party fishing boat, (Kennebunk)
- 1 whale watch boat, (Kennebunk)
- 1 whale watch/ eco excursion boat (Kennebunk)
- 2 lobster cruises and (1 in Kennebunk)
- 4 to 6 fishing charters.

In 1964 the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) signed an agreement with the Town of Kennebunk and Kennebunkport for the joint maintenance of the navigation channel. The goal is to provide a navigable channel for all recreational and commercial vessels travelling upriver as far as Doane's Wharf. The most recent dredge of the lower river was done in the spring of 2013. A partial dredging was done in 2016.

During the winter of 2018 the Army Corp took depth soundings throughout the navigational reach of the river. A report and recommendation for the next scheduled full or partial dredge is expected later in 2018. The winter storms of 2017-18 resulted in heavy shoaling at the mouth and severely damaged the rock structure on the leeward side of the Colony Jetty. Recommendations

to (1) repair the structure of the wall, (2) conduct a partial dredge at the mouth, and (3) establish the timeframe for scheduling the next full dredge are expected back from the ACOE in 2018.

The Army Corps agreement provides for the maintenance of two dredged anchorages, one of approximately four acres and one of approximately two acres. Each of these attained a depth of six feet. The ACOE also signed off on a 2018 project to improve the facilities and elevate the operations at Government Wharf in Kennebunkport. The agreement stipulated that, because the costs would be shared by the two Towns, access to the wharf has to remain open to all residents.

Kennebunk Harbor: Use Cases and Supporting Infrastructure

In 2018 the project to rebuild Government Wharf in Kennebunkport was completed. This rebuild was driven by two factors: (1) the need to elevate the physical structure (bait shack), ramp and public float over the FEMA surge zone and, (2) a need to improve the safety, utility and efficiency of this working fishing pier. Once completed the new shed, floats, pilings, hoists and the elevated parking will support 23 commercial fishermen.

Over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the level of activity associated with recreational boating. Most recently we have seen a rapid increase in the number of people kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding. During the peak season, mid June through September, the intersection of paddlers, recreational boaters, charter boats and commercial fisherman, leads to an overcrowding of the navigable channel.

Today the berthing space on the Kennebunk side of the river is quite limited. Considered collectively the marinas in Kennebunk (Performance Marine, Doane's Wharf, Federal Jacks and DiMillos) offers roughly 50 slips. This includes about a dozen slips available for transients. To put that in perspective, the river is home to nearly a dozen marinas providing slips for 300 vessels and roughly 360 feet of dock space. All of this is open to visitors arriving in either a recreational or commercial vessel.

Upstream of the Route 9 bridge, only small motorized boats, canoes, kayaks and other small craft have access. While both state law and local ordinances mandate that the entire reach of the Kennebunk River be travelled at a 'no wake' speed, incidents of water skiing and jet ski operations have caused safety concerns in the upper basin area of the river. In order to insure the safe use of the waterway by all persons, 'no wake' buoys and signs are posted from the upper basin to the mouth of the river.

Kennebunk River: Public Access

One of the biggest deficiencies along the waterway is the lack of public access. While recent and past surveys of Kennebunk citizens show overwhelming support for increasing pedestrian and small boat access for both fishing and recreational purposes, today Kennebunk only offers one small parcel where the public can 'put-in' a kayak, canoe or paddleboard. That location is accessible from Seagrass Lane and there is limited parking, with a permit necessary from the Kennebunk Police Department. There are no other public boat launch facilities located on the Kennebunk side of the river.

Pedestrian access to the banks of the Kennebunk River is provided through the property belonging to the Franciscan Monastery off Beach Street.

Private launching facilities on the Kennebunk side of the River are available from Performance Marine. On the Kennebunkport side of the river Chick's Marina and Kennebunkport Marina offer launching services. Fees are based on vessel size.

Fishermen access moorings from skiffs docked at Government Wharf. All other boaters with moorings in the river must depend on private marinas to access their skiffs.

Mousam River: Public Access

There are three points of public access to the Mousam River:

- A public boat ramp on the northeast side of the Route 9 Bridge where it crosses over the River. This site offers very limited on-street parking.
- Canoe and kayak access at Rogers Pond Recreation Area off Water Street. (This access is 3.5 miles from the ocean.)
- Intervale access near the High School.

Limited access, carry in and small boats only, exists at four locations along the Mousam: (1) the mouth of the River at the end of Great Hill Road, (2) Rogers Pond, (3) the Mill Street put-in currently allowed by Kennebunk Light and Power, (4) Western Avenue, and (5) the Hissong small boat launch off Alfred Road.

Beaches, Estuaries and Nature Trails

Kennebunk is bordered by ocean frontage that includes extensive stretches of sandy beach. These beaches are among the most important recreational and tourist features of the Town. Each of these locations, Goochs Beach, Middle Beach, and Mothers Beach, are town owned and remain open to public use (MAP HERE SHOWING BEACHES AND PARKING TO COME). Parking for these public beaches is available along one side of Beach Avenue (some of which is permitted) and along several of the adjoining side streets. Starting in July and running through Labor Day, lifeguards are stationed at Mothers and Goochs. Portable restrooms are also available at those two locations.

In addition to the publicly owned beaches, Kennebunk has been provided access to Parsons Beach. Parsons is a private beach located off Route 9, adjacent to the discharge of the Mousam River. Public access is provided, courtesy of the generosity of the family association that owns the land, from the mouth of the river to a point south along the Little River. The Town provides some of the public safety and maintenance needs required for the public's use of Parsons Beach. Users of this beach are asked to comply with all the messages that define the permitted uses while on private property.

Goochs Beach is the largest public beach in Kennebunk. In surveys of Tourism commissioned by the state of Maine, Goochs Beach is often cited as the #1 tourist destination for visitors coming to the Kennebunks. Goochs offers opportunities for swimming, surfing, sunbathing, kayaking, and paddle-boarding.

In addition to the direct recreational uses of the River, a network of trail systems, including the Eastern Trail (ET), are located within the Kennebunk River Watershed. The ET is a 65-mile scenic recreational greenway connecting Strawberry Bank in Portsmouth, NH to Casco Bay in South Portland. The ET is part of the East Coast Greenway, a developing trail system that will ultimately connect 2,900 miles of trails between Calais, Maine with Key West, Florida. The Kennebunk River, Ward Brook, and Duck Brook intersect the ET at five locations.

Issues & Implications

Water Quality Issues

- Water quality is a concern, and is addressed in the Natural Resources chapter.

Commercial Moorings

- The Kennebunk Board of Selectmen adopted an amendment to the Harbor Ordinance in 2015 that requires 50% of the moorings available in the harbor for commercial fishing use only.

Recommendations

- The Town should assess whether additional steps should be taken to ensure adequate future opportunities for commercial boats
- The Town should ensure that commercial marine uses are retained along the harbor.
- The Town should take steps to allow public access to the Kennebunk River, which has been identified as a high priority need.
- The Town should evaluate the balance of commercial and recreational use of the harbor (including mooring use) to determine if it is appropriate.
- The Monastery is a very significant and valuable open space area along the Kennebunk River. The Town should undertake to preserve or expand public access to this riverfront property and the surrounding ecosystem.