

Ecosystem Indicators and Tools in the Gulf of Maine

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The Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment is a U.S.-Canadian partnership of government and non-government organizations focused on the health, environmental quality and productivity of the Gulf of Maine. In 2006, the Ecosystem Indicator Partnership (ESIP) commenced activities in seven priority theme areas: aquaculture, coastal development, climate change, contaminants, eutrophication, aquatic habitats, and fisheries. Subcommittees were established for each theme area. Currently more than 150 volunteers from local, state and federal governments, along with academics and partners from non-government organizations participate in one or more of these subcommittees. Based on a consensus-based process, the subcommittees selected priority indicators for each of the theme areas.

Following the indicator selection process, ESIP developed an Indicator Reporting Tool (www.gulfofmaine.org/esip) to provide an easily accessible site for data on the priority indicators. The Tool allows users to visually assess data and use a graphing function to view status and trends at specific sites or for specific time periods. At the current time indicator data used in each of ESIP's five previously developed and released fact sheets are available through the webtool. By providing this compilation of information in an easily accessible format, ESIP is accomplishing one of the priority goals of the partnership: assisting users in locating and utilizing information on priority indicators in the transboundary Gulf of Maine Region.